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We're ready now to resume our study of Genesis chapter 22. God speaks, Abraham says, here I am. God says, take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love.

Go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as an olah, a burnt offering, on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. Now the question that struck me, and maybe I'm just peculiar in this regard, but we know that there's going to be this one mountain where this is going to take place. It's a very significant mountain, Mount Moriah.

It's going to be Mount Zion. The temple's going to be built there. God already knows that there's a specific mountain that he's going to take Abraham to.

Why does he say one of the mountains? Well, this is my belief. There is an awful lot going on in this section of Genesis. You could probably say this about virtually the whole book.

But we've already seen that there's a lot going on as far as wordplay and associations and threads and strands in the literary structure here that enhance and give depth to what would otherwise just be a straightforward telling of the story. The interesting thing is, and we're going to have a little bit of Hebrew here, so brace yourself, Moriah, you know Hebrew is just all consonants in the original. The vowel points and things were added later.

I saw a real funny, at least to me it was a real funny article, back in the mid-80s, I think, there was a big hoopla in the press about how they were recovering the tunes to David's psalms because they figured out that the vowel points were a kind of musical notation that they could assign notes to. And so they could go to the 23rd Psalm and read the vowel points and retrovert this back into music and get the tune that David wrote to the 23rd Psalm. Well, this was a real knee slapper for anybody that knew Hebrew because there were no vowel points in David's day.

There weren't any vowel points until the time of the Masoretes and vowel points were an aid to people who no longer spoke Hebrew as their native language, as their first language, to be able to pronounce the words correctly and put the emphasis where it belongs and so forth. And so these are late and subject to some interpretation and so there's no way they could have any musical value. But it was very funny.

We got a good laugh out of it in seminary, but it's one of those Hebrew student things that you had to be there. Anyway, so remember, Hebrew is a consonantal language. You just have the consonants and you just have to know what the vowels are.

In the context, you can figure out what form of a word is being used and so on. And usually there are enough, almost always there are enough consonants there for you to

figure out how to pronounce it. But Mariah, if you write this in Hebrew, is H-M-R-Y-H.

The reason it has an H in the front is it's got a definite article. It's Ha-Mariah. So it has an H in front.

So H-M-R-Y-H. Well, when he says one of the mountains, the word for mountain is Har, H-A-R, and it's in the plural here. So you have H-H-R-Y-M.

If you compare those two patterns, H-M-R-Y-H and H-H-R-Y-M, you find that this word for mountains is an anagram for Mariah. So that's interesting as far as it goes, but it's a reminder to us that there is a lot of information packed into a small space, especially in the original here. And when he says one of the mountains, rather than just saying a mountain, it makes an anagram of Mariah and it emphasizes to us the identity of the mountain.

It's going to be important which mountain. You think about the days when Genesis was first delivered to the people of Israel. What do they know about Mount Zion? Nothing.

Mount Zion is not there yet. Jerusalem is not there yet. When Moses writes these books and delivers them to Israel, they're not even in the land yet.

And it will be 400 more years before David takes the city of Jebus and makes it his capital city and takes ownership. And it will be toward the close of David's reign that the angel is going to stop over the threshing floor of Arona, and that's going to be the spot where the temple will be built by Solomon, as we saw in 2 Chronicles 3. So you think about being an Israelite and reading through this passage, and especially in Hebrew where you see this oddness. Why does he say one of the mountains? And you look at it and it harks back to Mariah.

They're going to immediately think, this Mount Mariah is the only place in our Bible that it's mentioned. It must be an important place. And, of course, it is.

This is going to be the place where God is going to choose to place his presence in Israel. And it is the place from which the glory of God is going to depart when you get over to Ezekiel. We've traced that out in times past of how the glory of God departs, heading east from that very same mountain.

It's a very significant place. And this is one of the first places where we find out how important this mountain is. Go to the land of Mariah.

Offer him there as an olah, a burnt offering, on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. So Abraham rose early in the morning. All you people who are early risers, you can claim Abraham as your father and say, see, it's a holy thing to get up early in the morning.

It just kills me to get up early in the morning. But some people are just kind of built that way. You get up early in the morning and you're really... Well, Abraham was apparently an early riser.

You remember that when he sent away Hagar and Ishmael, he arose early in the morning. And the good thing and the good pattern about Abraham is when he figures out what God wants, he gets up early in the morning and saddles his donkey and does it. That's what he did with Hagar and Ishmael.

That's what he does here. He doesn't put it off. He doesn't delay and say, well, maybe God will speak again and change his mind.

Maybe I need to wait a little bit and get a confirming sign. You remember when Zechariah gets the word in the temple, you're going to have a son, name him John, etc. Zechariah kind of unravels there and says, well, how do I know these things are so? If anybody might have a question about what God has just said, it's Abraham.

God, how do I know you really want me to sacrifice Isaac? Show me a sign. Let me put a fleece out. Let's take some time and meditate on this a little bit.

Well, Abraham, he knows when God speaks. He says, here I am. God says, take your son and offer him as a burnt offering.

Abraham gets up, oh, dark 30 the next morning, and heads out to do what God has said. That's a wonderful example. We sometimes, especially if something is difficult, tend to kind of hedge around.

But he rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son. He split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Why does he take the two servants? Well, this is very fascinating to me.

But the amount of provision that they're needing to take, this is, Abraham knows roughly where the land of Moriah is. Why does he know that? Well, he's currently now living down in the land of the Philistines. He's down closer to Gerar and so forth.

But if you look on a map, you remember when he used to live up there at Hebron by the oaks of Mamre and so forth. And when he walked with God and went down to a hilltop so he could look down and see Sodom and Gomorrah, he knows this area. He knows those mountaintops and he knows that location.

And Moriah, the place where God sees and the place where God provides, this is near where Abraham had his conversation with God. God says, if I find fifty righteous in this city, I will not destroy it. God will see them.

God will provide. God will preserve. God will protect.

So he's going back to this area where he had this conversation where he saw God face-to-face back in this same region. He knows this land. And he also knows how far away it is.

It's about a three-day journey. So he's got to have some help. He and Isaac can't carry all the stuff necessary for this three-day journey.

So he's going to take two servants with him. And these two servants are going to be at the foot of the mountain when these things take place. He split the wood for the burnt offering and he rose and went to the place of which God had told him.

So he does three things here. He saddled the donkey. He took the young men.

And he split the wood for the burnt offering. You get the idea here. If he already saddled the donkey, why didn't he do the wood first and then saddle the donkey and load this stuff up and go? Well, I think that he's not living where the wood is.

So he saddles up. And on the way, he stops at a grove or whatever and cuts the wood. So they've saddled up and departed.

And he knows where the wood is. And he cuts it along the way. They saddle up.

He takes the men. They cut the wood for the burnt offering. They rose and go to the place of which God had told him.

Now, apparently, God gives him some further guidance as to which mountain. Because he says, one of the ones, which I will show you. But the other reason that God uses that plural and doesn't specify the exact mountain is this is another tie back to Genesis chapter 12 and verse 1. Remember when God said, Get up out of your kindred and your nation and so forth and go to the place that I will show you.

And so God is purposely indefinite because this forms a bracket in Abraham's life. Verse 4 tells us that on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. Everything about this verse is full of meaning.

The third day. You can think of many things in Scripture that have to do with the third day. The most obvious ones being in the New Testament.

The sign of Jonah and so forth. But there are many other things in Scripture that talk about the third day. In the Old Testament, it is typical.

It's a typical period of preparation for something important. Flip over just a few pages to chapter 31 of Genesis, verse 22. When Jacob finally disentangles himself from Laban.

You remember he served seven years and married Leah. He served seven more years and married Rachel. Then he stayed seven more years.

He finally gets away from Laban and he has to kind of steal away in the middle of the night. He fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

Genesis 31, 22. Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. So then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for a seven days journey and overtook him in the mountains of Gilead.

So, three days pass in the salvation of Jacob from his bondage to Laban. You have in chapter 40, verse 20 of Genesis. Another reference to three days.

Joseph interpreting the dream. The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree and the birds will eat your flesh from you.

It came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, he made a feast for all his servants. He lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

But he hanged the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them. The chief butler, of course, didn't remember Joseph. But there was three days from the time that the butler and the baker had their dream.

Joseph said, three days hence, your fate will be determined. One of you will be lifted up in a good sense. One of you is going to be lifted up in a bad sense.

So, this three day period in terms of deliverance, in terms of rescue from a bad state, is significant. In chapter 42 of Genesis, verse 18, when his brothers come, he says, you are spies. In verse 14, in this manner you will be tested.

By the life of Pharaoh you will not leave this place until your youngest brother comes here. Send one of you and let him bring your brother and you shall be kept in prison that your words may be tested to see whether there is any truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.

So, he put them all together in prison for how long? Three days. Brothers of Joseph in prison for three days. In Exodus chapter 3, remember when Moses first starts talking to Pharaoh about letting the people go? What does he tell him? Well, we begin here with God's speech to Moses in chapter 3, when the people ask you and say, who has sent you and so forth? You gather the elders of Israel and say to them, this is verse 16 of Exodus 3, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has

appeared to me saying, I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt.

And I have said that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and of the Hittites, the Ammonites, the Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites to a land flowing with milk and honey. Then they will heed your voice and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us, and now please let us go three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. It's a three days journey from Egypt to the place where they are to sacrifice to the Lord their God.

But the king of Egypt will not let you go, not even by a mighty hand, so I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders, and so forth. So, the initial request of Pharaoh is to let them go on a three days journey to go offer sacrifice. This is what Abraham is going to do, is go on a three days journey to offer sacrifice.

And this three day waiting period is associated with deliverance. There are lots of other passages we could give you, but there's a few to tantalize you. I encourage you to make an investigation of that on your own.

The one other passage I would commend to your attention is Exodus chapter 19, verse 11, where the three day period is mentioned twice. And then again in verse 16 of Exodus 19. Exodus 19, 10.

The Lord said to Moses, Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, and let them be ready for the third day. Remember when they're all camped around Mount Sinai? Let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day, the Lord will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base, and so forth.

Verse 16, It came to pass on the third day in the morning there were thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain. The sound of the trumpet was very loud. All the people who were in the camp trembled.

Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. This, by the way, is where these two servants are going to stand while Isaac and Abraham ascend to the top. So, it is significant that it is a three day journey.

And on the third day, in Genesis 22, 4, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. Why doesn't it just say he saw it? It says he lifted his eyes and saw it. If I took the time to do justice to every word that is in this passage, we would spend the whole rest of our life trying to get through Genesis.

But whenever it talks about someone lifting up their eyes or looking up, it often introduces something of great significance. When someone lifts up their eyes and sees, it

emphasizes that what they're seeing is something important. And we've already seen the emphasis on Mount Moriah in the previous verse.

But you can see this. You can just make note of these passages and look them up yourself. This same construction is used in chapter 18, verse 2. Remember that? When Abraham sees God and his two servants.

Chapter 24, verse 63. Chapter 33, verse 1. And again in verse 5. Chapter 43 and verse 29. All in Genesis.

As well as multitudinous other places in the Scripture. But in Genesis 18 to 24, 63. 33, 1 and 5 and 43, 29.

When you see someone lifting up their eyes and looking, something big. This is a point of emphasis. He lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

Interesting that this phrase, from afar, this is the distance at which Israel is going to worship God when you get over there to Exodus. Chapter 20, verse 18. Exodus 20, verse 21.

Remember they had to stay away from the mountain. And they saw the cloud and the lightning and all that. But it's from afar.

It's the very same phrase that's used here. Only Moses is allowed to ascend the mountain and go inside that perimeter. You see that same phrase again in Exodus 24, verse 1. So when he sees it afar off, Abraham said to his young men, stay here with the donkey.

The lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you. It's difficult to know. I've often heard people remark on this that Abraham, when he says we will come back, that he figures that this is all going to come right somehow and Isaac is going to return with him.

It's also possible to believe that he's just saying what would be expected to the servants and that he's not really sure if Isaac is coming back or not. But it would be odd for him to say, wait here with the donkey. I will come back to you.

And they're going to say, well, how come he's not coming back? So to avoid questions, he might have just said that. The clincher to the fact that Abraham had an expectation that Isaac would return is found in our scripture reading this morning over in Hebrews chapter 11. Because under the superintending ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, the author of Hebrews explicitly states that Abraham believed that God would raise up Isaac.

Verse 17 of Hebrews 11, By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises, offered his only begotten son. Verse 19, concluding that

God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also basically received him in a figurative sense. So this is the conclusion of the inspired author of Hebrews, and I have no reason to doubt it.

I think Abraham says we will return because he believes, the only thing you can imagine, what could get him through this? What would make him put one foot in front of the other to go toward the mountain, to get up early in the morning and do this, if this was the end of everything for him? We often face situations where we don't think we can get through. We don't think there is an answer. Every part of it, every way you look at it, just fills us with dread and foreboding.

I can't do this. I won't do this. I don't want this to happen.

I can't get through this. Everybody in the world, whether believer or unbeliever, faces problems like this. Most people find a way to get through.

Shootings in schools, natural disasters, being driven out of your country by people who are trying to purify their population in some sense. Lots of people get through this, one way or another. What God gives us by way of promises is not just a coping mechanism.

Lots of people find a coping mechanism. Well, every cloud has a silver lining. We'll get through somehow.

People get through that aren't even believers, or are believers and don't care anything about the promises of God. What is the difference for someone like Abraham who gets through something difficult because of the promises of God? Other people get through. What's the difference? The difference is that there is attached to this getting through an eternal weight of glory.

We tend to think, well, the merit of it is that it helps us, that it's a way for me to handle my problems. Divine strength will come in and help me get through. That's what I'm going to lean on.

That is true, but that's not the point. If you stop and think about it, look at the TV when tornadoes go through or floods come through or earthquakes or lava flows or any of the other disasters that are common. There's not a week that goes by that somebody doesn't suffer something that forces them to get through something that they wouldn't choose and don't want to have to face.

They get through. Very few people look at their destroyed, tornado-scattered belongings and say, it's just not worth going on. I think I'll kill myself.

You find dozens of suicides in the community. People pick up. There's a natural instinct to survive and get on through.

People glorify how people have bonded together and come together. What a spirit of love and cooperation. Of course, they ignore the looting and all of the other dark sides of human nature that go on at the same time.

But that's such a hollow, shallow thing. The fact that you got through the loss of a leg or the loss of a loved one or the loss of your belongings, anybody can get through. It's how you get through and does it have an eternal weight of glory attached to it or not? Does it please God or not? The promises of God are not here just to help us get through, although they do.

They're here to glorify God and fulfill His plan. This is the wonder and the greatness of the life of faith. It's not just another crutch.

People have a whole store full of crutches in human culture and society. You can go down and get all kinds of self-help books and therapy groups and counseling and chemicals and all different kinds of things to get through your life in a reasonably organized manner. That's not the point.

Anybody can get through, but there's only one way to please God and that's by faith. And only pleasing God has any eternal consequence, has any weight of glory attached to it. And that's our calling.

When God calls you and when God calls me, He's not calling us to get through. He's calling us to reflect His glory. He's calling us to be righteous.

He's calling us to be a reflection of Him. Abraham is going to have one of the greatest opportunities to reflect the Lord God in this episode because he is going to offer his only son to fulfill the plan of God, which is what God Himself is going to do. You can imagine if Abraham had waffled, if he had wavered, if he had delayed, if he hadn't got up early in the morning, if he had rationalized, if he had thought, well, maybe God means Ishmael.

Let me go track down Ishmael and take him up on the mountain. It can't be what I... Abraham would have missed his moment. If Abraham stands on top of this mountain, the temple mount, the place where God is going to locate His own presence, the place where God sees and the place where God provides, Abraham is going to stand there and be a human reflection of the Lord God because he was ready and because he lived the life of faith.

He could have gotten through this if he had not had faith. He could have just not taken Isaac up there, but he would have missed the eternal weight of glory. He would have missed his place in the plan of God, his place in history and as a great example of what faith is and what fulfilling the plan of God is.

So this, as we have to hurry through some of the details in this story, just remember, Abraham doesn't miss his moment because Abraham is operating in faith. So when he

says, the lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you, he's not just in denial. Abraham has drawn a conclusion in his own mind.

He said, you know, I remember when God promised me back in chapter 12 that He was going to bless me and multiply me. I remember when He told me in chapter 13 after Lot left that He was going to multiply me and give me descendants after me to inherit this land. I remember in Genesis chapter 15 where He ratified the covenant by passing between the pieces of the cut up animals, the bullock and the sheep and the ram and the two doves, the dove and the pigeon.

God came and confirmed that promise. I remember when I talked to him about Eliezer and he said, no, it's going to be a son from your own loins. It's going to be a son that Sarah bears to you.

He is going to be your descendant. You're going to have descendants innumerable as the stars through Isaac. I remember when God promised me that.

So if God is saying now, go up and kill your son and he hasn't gotten married and had any kids yet, this is the same God that gave me this child from death. Abraham and Sarah were dead in terms of fruitfulness, in terms of being able to have children. And this child came out from death.

If God wants to take him back into death, it doesn't really matter because the same God that brought him out of death can bring him out of death again. He came out of death the first time. He must be going to come out of death again.

And so Abraham seizes onto that promise of God and it's his reality. He says, God has promised. Whatever else God says and whatever else he asks me to do, God has promised, in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

So some kind of way, Isaac has got to survive this experience and he's got to come back with me so that he can grow up and get married and have offspring because God has promised over and over again. And Abraham is convinced of the promise of God. He is also convinced that he needs to obey God.

And so if there's a conflict, he just leaves that for God to work out. God's going to have to work it out and that's what we need to do. Sometimes it seems as though there is a conflict between the promises of God and what we are called upon to do.

It seems like if we do the right thing, there's going to be financial disaster. If we do the right thing, there's going to be a relationship disaster. If we do the right thing, something awful is going to happen.

What's our reality going to be? Are we going to hear the calling of God? Are we going to say, God, I know what you've said. Here I am. I'm going to get up early in the morning

and I'm going to do what you have said.

You can't overemphasize the importance of it. This is what Abraham believes. So in verse 6, he took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son.

This means Isaac wasn't carrying it before. The servants and the donkey were carrying various parts of this. Apparently the servants were carrying the wood because now he lays it on Isaac.

The donkey can't even climb this steep hill. If you've ever seen the topography, you get a topographical map of Jerusalem and the Mount Zion area. He's apparently coming up from the Kidron Valley and climbing this ascent and it's steep.

The donkey's not even going to be able to make the trip. So he leaves the servants and the donkey down at the base. Isaac gets the wood.

Abraham took the fire in his hand and a knife. This is the first mention of the knife. When is the last time we saw fire and a knife together? You remember Genesis chapter 15 when God told Abraham to get the animals and cut them in half? What passed between the pieces? A smoking pot? A burning torch? You had the cutting and you had the fire.

And once again, probably even as Abraham is picking up this knife and this smoking pot, the last time in our story this smoking pot was seen was when it passed between the pieces, which has been a few years now back in Abraham's experience. But he's got the knife and he's got the pot. Well, he's had this kind of stuff before when God confirmed the covenant promises.

And so even as he takes it in his hand, he's remembering. And the two of them went together. Now in verse 7, Isaac spoke to Abraham's father and said, My father.

And he said, Here I am, my son. This is the second time somebody has called out to Abraham and he has said, Here I am. Then he said, Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? It's interesting that Isaac assumes that it's going to be a sheep.

When you go over to Leviticus chapter 1, the regulations for a whole burnt offering, this can be a bull. It can be a sheep. There are several different animals that can be used.

But for this particular offering, Isaac assumes that it's going to be a sheep. Abraham seems to confirm that when he says in verse 8, My son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. And we know at the conclusion of the story that it is in fact a sheep, a ram, that is offered.

That three-year-old ram that was one of the animals cloven in twain back there in Genesis 15, that was one of the animals at that place of covenant. It was a three-year-

old ram, as well as the three-year-old bullock and the three-year-old she-goat. And so once again it says, The two of them went on together.

You have a nice little echo from back in verse 6. When they took the fire and the knife, the two of them went together. They had this little conversation and the two of them went together. The father and the son are united.

They are of a mind. And you get the idea here, you wonder if Isaac isn't starting to figure out what's in the wind here. But he continues on.

Whether he has figured it out or not, he is satisfied with the explanation of his father and he continues. He's carrying the wood up there and we find, and I tend to think that Isaac is starting to figure out what's going on without really understanding the motivation for it. He's starting to get the drift here and I'm sure that probably something in Abraham's attitude as they've embarked on this journey gave him the idea that something dreadful was in the works.

But in verse 9, They came to the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order. And he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar.

Now if Isaac is a teenager and if Abraham is 110, 115 years old, do you think that this binding of Isaac is something that was done by force? There's no way. Isaac willingly allows himself to be bound. You don't think Abraham is going to be able to pick him up and plop him down on the altar.

Isaac is willing. Isaac is compliant in this. I don't imagine he's too enthusiastic about it, but he is cooperating with his father.

The interesting thing about this, when God says offer him as an olah, a whole burned offering, if you go over to Leviticus chapter 1, we don't have time to turn there and go through all the details, but there are two differences between this offering and a standard whole burned offering. First of all, in Leviticus 1, when you look at the whole burned offering, it is a sin offering. The offerer places his hand on the head of the animal, acknowledges his sin, and there's a transfer implied here of sin from the offerer to the sacrifice.

That sacrifice is killed first and cut up in pieces, and then the pieces are placed on the altar. Then there's no binding of the sacrifice at all. It's slain, it's cut up, it's placed on the altar, and it's then burned in toto.

This is different. This sacrifice is unique in this way because it doesn't share these details of the whole burned offering. We assume that the regulations for the whole burned offering really didn't change from Adam and Cain and Abel all the way down through the law of Moses.

And so it's interesting because it makes this unique. This is the only time that this kind of whole burned offering was ever prepared for. It reminds us of the uniqueness of what this represents, which is of course the offering of Jesus Christ and at the same time the idea of substitution that's about to come up.

Abraham builds the altar. He put the wood in order. He bound Isaac, laid him on the altar on the wood.

It's another little irony here that climbing up the mountain, the wood was on Isaac's back. Now Isaac is on his back on the wood, on the altar. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

Stretch out the hand. This is another one of those phrases like raised up his eyes or looked up and saw. It's another one of those things when you see that stretch out the hand, this is a marker of something important that's about to happen.

He stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. You often see this in pictures where Abraham has his hand over his head about to plunge the knife down. I don't think that's the way it happened.

The ritual slaying of a sacrifice was the slitting of the throat. You don't rear back and stab the animal in the chest. He would have reached out, grabbed the knife and reached across to the far side of Isaac's neck and gotten ready to draw the knife across his throat and shed his blood in that way.

But at that point, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. You get the idea that he calls out twice because he wants to make sure Abraham hears and stops. And Abraham, like he did at the very beginning of the chapter, says, here I am.

And he said, do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him. And the word for anything is the standard word for anything, but it's in an unusual form in Hebrew. It's very emphatic.

You get the idea. And even when the scribes would read this passage, there was an extra doggish. There was an extra vowel point that was put in here to make sure that when they read it, they said, do not do anything to the lad.

For now I know that you fear God. Then it says, since you have not withheld your son, your only son. But this is just a simple vav in Hebrew, a simple word for and.

It's translated lots of different ways, but it can just as easily be translated so that. I know that you fear God, so that you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. It isn't that God needed proof.

It is a demonstration of the fear of God that Abraham already had. And this is a working out. Abraham didn't develop this faith on the way up the mountain.

He didn't develop it at the last minute when he reached for the knife. He already feared God and he was prepared. He had the soul.

He had the faith to claim the promise and to believe that if he did have to slay his son, God would have to bring him back. That's the reality that he operated on. Then in verse 13, you have another one of those markers.

Abraham lifted his eyes and looked. This time, instead of seeing the mountain that far off, he sees the ram caught in a thicket by his horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

Abraham called the name of the place, the Lord will provide. You've heard this in English, Jehovah-Jireh. The Lord will provide.

And once again, the Lord there is will provide. As it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided. So once again, you have the opportunity to demonstrate faith that had already been cultivated, that had already been developed.

Abraham had his ups and downs, but he reaches this point and he operates in faith. It's just that simple, but it's his reality. And when you come to a point where it's all on the line, which way are we going to go? The Christians and the lions.

We seldom face anything that severe. It's usually lesser tests. And because they're lesser, we don't recognize them as tests and we tend to be more apt to fail.

But God has called. We are called. And if there's something we love more than God, we're not worthy to be called disciples.

Remember what Jesus told the disciples? If someone loves father or mother or sister or brother more than me, he is not worthy to be my disciple. Doesn't mean that you're not saved, but you remember that passage in Hebrews where it says, God is not ashamed to be called their God. What an awful thing that God would sort of wince when we say, Oh yes, I'm a believer in God.

Oh yes, he's my God. And we're an example of faithlessness. We're an example of someone who really hasn't put God first.

It's a clear opportunity. It's a clear challenge to us. Not just on the mountaintop experiences of life, but in the daily decisions of life.

Who's going to be first? What are we really wanting? What are we really shooting for today and tomorrow and the next day? If it is either way, we're going to get through the day. It's very unlikely any of us are going to perish anytime soon. We've got a lot of days

left.

And we'll get through the days one way or another. And there'll be good days and bad days. The difference is whether or not we are laying up treasure in heaven, earning, building up that eternal weight of glory.

That's the measure. That's the difference. It's not just getting through.

It's how we get through, why we get through, and who is glorified as a result. Abraham is a great and shining example of reflecting the Lord's glory by faith. That's our opportunity.

Let's close in prayer. We thank you, Father, for the privilege of studying your word. We thank you that we're alive in your plan and we have the opportunity to reflect your glory and to fulfill the calling that you have placed on our lives.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of these things when it counts, that we will see clearly, that we will perceive your promise, and it will be the object of our faith and it will serve as our reality when we set our priorities, when we make our decisions, when we engage in the actions each and every day. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.