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[00:00:05] We're in Genesis Chapter 22, if you have your Bibles, open up with me to Genesis Chapter 22. And. If you don't have a Bible, download our app. Just really, really want to encourage you guys to bring. Your Bibles to church. I know it might sound weird to some of you, but but you want to make sure that what I'm saying is from the book. The Bible says now, it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham and he that is. Abraham said, Here I am. Then he said, take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love. First time the word love appears in the Bible. 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. So check this obedience out. Immediate. 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 the wood for the burnt offering in a rose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then, on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place a far off in. Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. The lad and I will go yonder and worship first time worship. The word worship appears in the Bible and we will. I want you to check this faith out and we will come back to you. So Abraham took the word of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son, and he took the fire in his hand and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham, his father, and said, My father.

[00:01:53] And he said, Here I am, my son. Then he said, Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering many Hebrew scholars say can also read Like this My son God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, so the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told them, and Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order. And he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood, and Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called you him from heaven and said, Abraham Abraham, so he said, Here I am. And he said, do not lay your hand on the land or do anything to him. For now, I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son and Abraham called the name of the place the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day in the Mount of the Lord, it shall be provided. And, father, we're just we're just in oh god, we are in all our minds, our hearts, our spirit already making the connection of this story God to the story to to the gospel. Father. Thank you. Thank you. God, that. Your love was unrestrained in that you gave what mattered most to you.

[00:03:45] And we pray today, Father, in light of that, in light of the greatest expression of love, that father in our lives, there would be nothing that we would hold back. There would be nothing that we would hold on to God, that we would not reduce you to a slice or a sliver of our life, compartmentalizing you and and containing you in a safe place. Having a piece of you to pacify or justify our conscience, God, you want so much more than that because you have a jealous love for us. And so to speak, God, speak to our hearts. God, we have not come to this place to hear the voice of man. God, we have come to hear your voice. Leave. No heart unspoken to today in Jesus name, Amen. You can have a seat. You know, Abraham loved God and he worshiped God. Abraham, for sure, was not a casual worshiper like so many Christians are. He built altar as he walked in righteousness. He was a man who prayed. He believed in God. He walked in faith. When those moments came, he took real steps. He was the man who gave of his possessions as an expression of worship to the Lord. And so, you know, as we consider Abraham's life from this moment, you know, as we've seen all the things that precede Genesis Chapter 22, it is evident it is evident that Abraham is not playing relational games with the Lord, and yet his biggest test had yet to come. And I think for sure, as we read this story and you know, we we as probably not the first time we've read this story, we're familiar with it. And so in a way, I think sometimes we lose the sense of we lose the sense of immediate impact as we consider things we haven't considered before.

[00:05:43] Like Abraham hearing this for the very first time. Abraham could have never imagined This is what I'm saying to you. Abraham could have never imagined that God would call him to something like this, that God would even say these words to him. Because of course, Abraham had been waiting for the son of promise, and Isaac was the son of promise. And so contextually like this didn't even fit into the narrative that God had been writing in Abraham's life. You know, I want to put this story in some consolidated terms because I want you to understand what what is really happening here. God is saying to Abraham, Take your only son whom you love. More than anything, the fulfillment of the promise that I've given to you and the hope of the promise to be fulfilled, slay him and burn his body as a sacrifice to me to ensure that you love me more than your son, more than the promises that I have given to you. More than anything, you know, to be worshipers of God. We must be willing to lay on the altar what we love to ensure that we love God the most. Let me just say that again, to be worshipers of God and and listen, you know, thank God for the gathering of his people and these collective times of worship. You know where we're singing songs to God. I don't know about you guys, but it feels good, doesn't it? When when God's present and the spirit of God is falling, you know, because you know, there are times where you walk in with great anticipation and like in a spiritual sense, you're all lit up and on fire and you're ready to roll before you get through the door.

[00:07:24] You know you're just excited. And then there are other moments. You know, there are other moments where it's like, you're more like a you're more like a smoking flax than a raging fire. It's like, you know, there's barely a spark there. Spiritually, you can't connect the dots you walk in and it's like, Well, I love God, I do love God, but I just I just don't feel I just don't feel connected to him. I'll just tell you right now there are times where I'm preparing for a message and it's like, Man, you can you can feel before the message is preached what God is going to do. And then there are times where it's like, God, I have no clue how this is going to come together. I mean, this does it right now as I'm thinking about it. It doesn't even make any sense to me these poor people today. And then and then then you're in the presence of God with his people and and he's moving and we're singing praise. And all of a sudden there's this collective fire that God begins to breathe life into. Thank God for those moments, but you know, yeah, yeah, that's right. And not to get sidetracked today, but, you know, I mean, we've gone through so much and people have had to quarantine and isolate and and I still like people coming to me two years after COVID started and they're like, Pastor, you know, this is my first service back. And and they say, you know, in person is so much different than online, and there is nothing like being in the presence of God and his people. There's nothing like it. And so, you know, but you know, we don't just reduce we don't just reduce worship down to singing collectively together or on our own.

[00:09:06] When we're talking about worship, we're talking about really laying everything on the altar. We're talking about understanding that in our own lives, there is a hierarchy of loves that we we understand that as worshipers of God, that there is one throne on our heart and there is only one that deserves to sit on that throne. And if we're honest with each other, you know, sometimes even as Christians, there are things that displace God from the throne of our hearts. And by that, I simply mean our Isaac's our Isaac's can become idols. The things that we've been praying for, the things that we've been beseeching God for, the things that we've been desiring in our life is God is just so gracious and faithful to bless us, and he brings them into our life. Sometimes, you know, we begin to get on this trajectory where we start to hold on to those things. We start to hold on to those answers of prayer in a sense, where they begin to vie for and fight for a place that only God deserves to have the very and this is mind blowing. But it is reality. The very blessings that God gives us, if we're not careful, can become abominations before him. They can become abominations before him and because we begin to and we would never articulate it like this. But practically this is how we start to live. We begin to worship those things instead of the Lord. And you know, they can be good things. More often than not, the things I'm talking about aren't necessarily like straight up evil things. They're good things, you know, you pray to be used by God. And so God stirs the gift within you, grants you a ministry opportunity.

[00:10:43] And pretty soon, your focus on that has taken has taken away your devotion to the Lord. You know, you're a single person and you've struggled in that place of single ness and you begged and pleaded and Besart, you have done everything on the face of this planet to get God to answer this prayer. And you know what God does? God answers the prayer and he blesses you with him, or he blesses you with her. And the danger sometimes is that that him or that her can begin to replace the Him the one that deserves to be at the center of your life. You know you've you've always had this dream of having a family, you know, having kids. And so God blesses you with that. And pretty soon, maybe the kids or maybe the money or the business or the possessions begin to take the place that only God deserves to have. You know, there are hierarchies of love in our life, and only God deserves to sit at the top right. Jesus was making this point, he was talking about discipleship, and he said this in super strong words, and I'm telling you as I read these words today, they're they're so strong today that there are people who try to explain them away. He was talking about discipleship and he said this. Luke 14:26. He said if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his or her own life. Also, he cannot be my disciple. He cannot be my disciple. Now there are many people who are like, Wow, I never knew that Jesus endorsed hate. Of course, that's not what you're saying. He's not. He's not endorsing hatred because, you know, this is the same lord who said, you've heard that it was said to those of all that you shall hate your enemies, but I say to you, love your enemies.

[00:12:47] And so of course, he's not endorsing hatred. The word hate can also be translated to love less right? To love less. Jesus is saying, Hey, listen, make sure. And in particular, with relationships, you have things in the right order, right? You are. You are ensuring that you love me. You have a greater love than me. Lord, I'd love to follow you. But you know what? I've got to be present for when my father dies so I can bury my father. Hey, you're not worthy. You're not worthy of following me because you need to take up your cross, deny yourself and follow me. He said. You know, there is a hierarchy of loves, and Jesus is saying, If you really want to come after me, if you really want to be my disciple, then I need to sit at the top. And if in fact, you're not willing to live like that, if you're not willing to rearrange your life, if you're not willing to rearrange your life, you cannot be my disciple. You know, salvation is a gift. But truly, following Christ will cost you everything. It will cost you everything. And and and and let me just say, let me just say this is not a popular message. This is not a popular message, you know, and some ministry philosophies operate like this. Well, listen, as long as we got a room full of half hearted, lukewarm people who have given God a slice of their life does success to us. Well, it's not success in the eyes of God. It's not success in the eyes of God, because God is not looking for a room full of lukewarm, half hearted individuals who have compartmentalized him, right? You know what I'm talking about have given him a slight slice.

[00:14:29] Have given him a section, you know, for whatever reason, maybe maybe they want to pacify themselves. There's a bunch of. There's a bunch of crap in their life. There you have it. And you know what, they don't want to give it up. They don't want to give it up. And so what do they do? They get they they they create a little compartment, a little religious compartment and they say, Well, you know what, I've got, I put him in his spot. And so I can continue to do this because I've pacified that sense of guilt in my mind. At least I've given him something he doesn't want, just something he wants everything. He wants everything. And that's what the real call to discipleship is. So, so this is what he is doing in Abraham's life, the Bible says that God tested Abraham. God tested Abraham now. Listen, contextually, what God was calling Abraham to do was not uncommon. It was a common practice among the heathen nations to sacrifice their children to God. And so it wasn't as if this was out of Abraham's context now. Now this and understand that we have the full canon of scripture like our understanding of God is so much fuller and complete than what Abraham had. Abraham had a sliver, a slice of revelation, albeit beautiful. It was nothing compared to what you and I have today. And so we can't conflate the two, right? Abraham, like he hears something, and it's within his context. God knew all along that the second Abraham's hand went up with the night knife in it, that the Angel of the Lord was going to stay his hand right. That this whole thing would not go full process. God knew that. And so, you know, you read the story and you think, Well, why? Why would God do that to Abraham and our wives? Sometimes, like, if you're honest, I know there's a couple of you out there that think this is kind of a lie in the sense of objection.

[00:16:42] Like, how could a God of love do that? How could a God of love treat his servant like that? After everything Abraham's been through, after everything Abraham has sacrificed, after everything Abraham had had done for God. And you know what? This is like part of the problem in our lives. We inflate ourselves sometimes to be even greater to God. And and we make God a debtor to us almost as if, because Abraham has done all these things, that God now is indebted to him to treat him a certain way. And I just want to I want to flip that perspective today because we shouldn't be saying why or how. In the sense of objection, we should be thinking, Wow, God, how could you give us such a great privilege that you would allow us to be your sons and daughters knowing God that this is the way this is your way with your children? This is what you do. You test us test in the sense of refining test in the sense of perfection or perfecting God. Who are we like? Let's just flip that whole perspective of God who are we were. We resonate with us almost. That said, what is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you would even consider him, God that you would consider us? Who was Abraham? That you would speak his name? Who is Abraham? That you would call him out of Earth? Who is Abraham? That you would give him such great revelation while he was in the midst of his own polytheistic paganism? And yet, God, you were merciful and gracious. What a privilege. What an honor the soul must as he's thinking about this in a self-reflective way concludes, We are just dust.

[00:18:26] We are just dust before God. I'm not going to sing a Kansas song right now. So don't. I didn't say we're dust in the wind. I said, We're dust before God. This is the way of God with his children. Listen, the purpose of testing isn't pass or fail. It is the process of growing through refining. It is the process of God perfecting our faith. Sometimes, you know, when we're in a test, we we we it God is testing us like we can be tested by many things. But when it is the Lord that has got us in that spot, sometimes we have this idea that it's like a pass or fail thing. And that's how God, that's how God views it. And it's not pass or fail. It is a process, a growing process, a refining process, a shaping process that God has us in. Tests don't reveal to God what he doesn't see. They reveal to us what we don't see. Like you know, in this situation, God knew exactly how Abraham was going to respond. The opportunity really was more for Abraham than it was in a sense for God. And when you and I are going through the refining fire, when you and I are in that process, when God is tugging on your heart and you saying, Hey, do you love me? Then lay this down, set this on the altar. Reorder your love hierarchy so that I sit on the top. When God does that, what he is doing is not discovering what he does not know because God knows how we're going to respond before we respond. God is refining us. God is shaping us. God is revealing to us because, you know, the fact is this you can talk all day long about how you would respond in the middle of a test or a trial, but you really won't know until that test or trial comes.

[00:20:20] God speaks to us, and he identifies areas that need to be devoted to him, sins that need to be repented of idols that need to be abandoned. Faith that needs to be strengthened. And listen, this process never stops. You're never going to arrive at some point in this life and say, Hey, all of the refining and perfecting is done. There's no more shaping left for God to do. No, that's not true. You've been walking with God for 30 years, for 40 years. Will God bless you? You've not arrived. Stop acting like it. Stop acting like it. Do you know what I'm talking about? Stop acting. I'm going to get on a horse. Stop acting like you have it all together and no one else does. Stop acting like these. Young believers are so lost almost as if when you were a young believer, you had it all together. No, you didn't. No, you didn't. First Peter, chapter one for seven. Moving right along, you know, Peter Peter is speaking to a group of churches. They're going through a difficult time. And he says this to them, he says. In this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be. You've been grieved by various trials. Why? Why that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that parish is, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter says, Hey, listen, you're going through a hard time in your grief. But let me tell you something, there's purpose in this. God's doing something. God is refining you. He's testing your faith by fire. You are in the crucible of affliction. And instead of going around the mountain of why you need to stop and understand what it is that God is doing, he is shaping your faith.

[00:22:14] Listen, if you get stuck on why today you will never experience the power of God for tomorrow. You will be so consumed with why God is allowed this particular thing that you will not get out of the trial. What it is that God is seeking to teach you. And maybe that's where you're at today. Maybe you're in a time of testing today. I would just want to analyze this victory of Abraham's because it's an astounding victory. It's an extraordinary thing that Abraham was called to do and what we see in this story, and I'm sure there's so much more depth to it than what's contained in these verses. But what we see is that Abraham experienced a victory. Why did he experience of victory in this time of testing? Well, number one was this he was prepared for it. He was prepared for it. He was prepared for this moment because of prior obedience as he was prepared for this moment. He was prepared to have victory to succeed in this test because of prior obedience, as you know, sharing with my wife the story. And she was the one that that that brought this to my attention. You know that Abraham had been built up in faith over the course of time. Right? It wasn't as if God started with the most difficult trial to test him with immediately. There were little trials all along the way. There were little difficulties. There were little challenges. Was Abraham perfect? No, he was not. But he learned to be obedient. He learned that God would always be faithful. There were trials along the way that over the course of time built his faith up. You know, it's kind of like, say, today, I would never do this because.

[00:24:04] I hate to say I'd never do it, you know, but I hate running, you know? But if today, if today I'm like, You know what? I think I want to run a 5K. I'll tell you what, I wouldn't go out tomorrow and run a 5K because an ambulance would have to come and and we'd have to cart me away. And it would not be good, right? I'm smart enough to know as I do my own personal self-evaluation that I am in no condition to run a 5K. So what would I do? Well, I download an app or I'd hire somebody else to run it for me, you know, I mean, that might be the easiest thing. But I downloaded the app. You know, there are apps that you can get that train you to run a 5K. And so I download one of those apps and and I'd start tomorrow and the app would just. Lay out for me the order of how to approach a five K that goes something like this. You run for 30 seconds, you walk for 90 seconds. You run for anybody. Want to do this with me? Raise your hand. No, don't because I'm not doing it. You run for 30, you walk for 90. And then what happens is over the course of time, it begins to shift. The larger volume of time goes for running because you know, you have greater stamina, you have a greater capacity to do that because you've been being built up over the course of time. And this this illustration is exactly what happens as you're walking with the Lord. God is building you up over the course of time. There are little trials every single day that God is placing within your life that are intended to build your faith up so that when you get to the big one, when you get to the big one, you will succeed and not fail.

[00:25:42] Now listen, this means that when the little trials come, you need to be obedient. You need to be faithful. You need to be being built up because if you're not faithful in the little ones, you will not be faithful in the big ones. Do you understand what I'm talking about every day God is placing before you opportunities to trust him in things that maybe even seem unreasonable to do like this was with Abraham. But as you are faithful, over the course of time, he will be building you up to sustain the big trial when it comes. The second thing that I see here is that he responded right now. This is super simple, but I just want to walk through the process here. There is. There's a call that God gives to Abraham simply says his name Abraham. Right. There is a response that Abraham gives. He said, Here I am. I'm not sure if he regretted that later or not. It's like, Man, I just didn't say anything. We'll talk about that in a second because some of you were doing that right now, there's a response that he has, he says, Here I am. There is a command that God gives in verse two right. Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and go to the land of Moriah and offer him. There is a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I'll show you. And then there is obedience, there is obedience. And there's not just obedience, but there's faith. And there's not just faith, but there's worship because it was obedience and because it was faith, it became worship. But I just want you to consider today how prompt his obedience was. The Bible says in verse three, Right, there is this crazy wild command that God gives to Abraham.

[00:27:22] And then right away in verse three, the Bible says, What did he do? What did he do? He rose early. He rose early in the morning. There's no doubt that this was a sleepless night for Abraham. There is no doubt that in his mind he was. He was struggling with what it was that God was directing him to do. But but what I love about Abraham is this his response of obedience was prompt. It was right away. He did not delay. He did not delay because Abraham had walked with God long enough to know that delayed obedience, his disobedience. Abraham had walked long enough with God to know that delayed obedience was disobedience. I think Abraham knew Abraham knew himself. Look what you don't want to do in a situation like this, he says to himself. Abraham is let time go by because the more time you let go by, the more likely you are to talk yourself out of this. Do you know what I'm talking about? Like, God gives a call and sometimes, you know, instead of being obedient, what we do is we just we go right to denial. God gives a call. It's not easy. It's not that we don't love God, but we've got our priorities upside down. Or there's this thing that has taken place or a position in our heart that God doesn't want it to have. And so God says, Hey, you need to do some reordering here. You need to let this go. You need to hand this over to me. And, you know, instead of being obedient right away, what we do is, well, that probably wasn't God. That probably wasn't God. Or we do something like this. Well, that's an awesome message for him or for her and.

[00:28:58] And so, you know, you leave the service and you posted on social media as a message for everyone else that God intended for you. Right. And you might even do something like, Hey, man, this really ministered to me today. Thought it would bless you guys. But the fact is, you're straight up lying like, you're lying. You've just framed it like that to look spiritual. But the truth is this you did not you did not receive the message. You say, Well, how can you say that to me, pastor? Because the only way you know if you received it is by walking in obedience. That's how, you know, sometimes when God speaks to us, our response is denial. Sometimes it's anger, sometimes it's anger because that thing has really gotten a hold of our hearts, right? It's become something that we love. To an extent that it's actually become unhealthy for us, and it doesn't have to be a bad thing. It can be a good. Thing, and we become so connected to it, we have such an affection for Paul said this to the church at Corinth. He said, You guys, you know, the problem isn't my words that I'm speaking to you. The problem is your affections. You have an affection for the things of this world. And so my word doesn't even get to you because you're holding on so tightly to things that you need to let go of. And so sometimes, you know, our response is anger. Like God, really? God, how could you call me to do this? And we're so mad and that anger what it reflects? The reality of what it reflects is this not that God is wrong, but something's wrong within us. Something is wrong on the inside.

[00:30:30] Maybe, maybe our responses to bargain with God. Well, God, I don't really want to give this, but will you take this? You know, I mean, we we start, we start bargaining with God because we don't want to really give this thing over. But you know, God's easy and God can be bought, and he's gracious, careful. Careful with that. I mean, really, really think that through who are you talking to, who are you talking to? Is God so trivial that you can bargain with God and negotiate with God like some street vendor on the streets of Las Vegas? I got that. Is that that will lead you into blasphemy, right? God is not to be bargained with. God is to be obeyed. Maybe it's depression. You know, it's like, Oh man, you know, God, you're such a bummer. And then then you just tell everyone following God's just so hard. It's so hard. You know the things that we have to give up and the things we have to sacrifice and and, you know, try carrying 100 pound pitbull them to Calvary and then having your wrist nailed to it. Right? Somebody said this, they said, is just really solid. Our faith is not really tested until God asks us to bear what seems unbearable to do, what seems unreasonable and to expect what seems impossible. Is that your life is that is is that my life? Our faith is not really tested until God has asked us to bear what seems unbearable to do, what seems unreasonable and to expect what seems impossible, you say, Well, I've not experienced that with God. Well, then either one, you're really not a Christian or number two. You've you've boxed God in and you've dictated to him what he can do and what he can't do.

[00:32:16] Because if you're really walking with God, that happens all the time. It happens all the time. Now there are some people who when I talk about this story, they're like, Yeah, you know what, Pastor Abraham, he didn't struggle with this. He was a man of faith. He just obeyed right away. And there was no there was no issue within his heart and really is the same way for me. I never struggle with obedience. When God calls me to do something, I'm like, You're a liar, you're a liar. You're the last person on the face of the Earth. I'm ever going to trust because, you know, Abraham did struggle. You know that there had to have been a tug of war within Abraham's heart. You know, there had to have been some sense of God. This doesn't make sense to me. God, this seems unreasonable. And yet what I love about Abraham and you know, it's interesting. It's interesting that the scripture does not disclose what was happening in Abraham's life. There's only one thing that we know, and I'm going to get to it in just a second. But what I love about Abraham was he was obeyed. He was obedient in the midst of the struggle. He was obedient in the midst of the struggle. He didn't wait to make it reasonable. He didn't wait to figure it out. He didn't push pause on his obedience. He was obedient right away. He did what God called him to do. And it all was working out while he was walking in obedience and while he was walking in faith. And you know, those hard times when you do that may be more pleasing and honoring to God than anything else. There was a faith conclusion that Abraham made.

[00:33:51] Now I know you know this, but I just want to say it because I think it'll I think it'll enlighten this piece. Right? The word conclude means to make a judgment or decision that settles a matter. It means to make a judgment or decision that settles the matter. So I kind of see it like this. Abraham hears this. There's no way that is easy. I mean, he's got a sleepless night for sure. He's praying to God. He takes a step of obedience and in the midst of the struggle, right? He makes a faith conclusion. He makes a decision that settles the matter once and for all for him. And we know this is the case because Hebrews Chapter 11 Verse 17 says this by Faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac and he, who had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son of whom it was said, And Isaac, your seed shall be called. Listen, there is obedience like we got that part. But what was going on in his heart? The Bible says, concluding that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. Did you get that? So so he's got this struggle. He walks in obedience, but he does so because there was a conclusion he came to. There was a judgment. There was a decision to settle the matter once and for all, and it was this God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. In other words, in other words, Abraham, as he's walking, he comes to this faith conclusion and it goes something like this God. If he is the son of promise, if this is the one through whom all nations will be blessed and through whom you will make me, you will make from me a nation that can't be numbered, then even if I slay him, God, you will resurrect him.

[00:35:35] Even if I slay him, you will resurrect him. And and listen, the potential spinning in Abraham's life, like walking around the mountain of why? Why I got this and why god that. Not all of it came to a grinding halt when he made his faith conclusion. You know, when when we had Boston, our Rottweiler, when he was a little guy we used to love to take and we do this with all of our dogs because, you know, it's equal opportunity in our house. But we take a little flashlight and you know, you shine the light on the ground and you roll in a circle. Do you guys ever do this with your dogs? I know I'm going to get an email. Someone's going like, you're just cruel. You're cruel. And the dogs, they chase the light, right? They just go around in a circle and they chase this mirage. They chase this illusion. And there's there's nothing productive out of that, except it brings a lot of joy and humor to the person who is doing it. You know, maybe you've done that to your cat, which this is a great moment just to say dogs go to heaven. What I didn't finish that sentence, you guys did, and I'm really shocked right now, are you? I'm just messing with you. God loves cats, too. But but you know, like, I had you until that part right now and now you're just so mad. You're like, I'm out of here. But you know, listen, sometimes we're like that. Sometimes what we run in circles, we're following, we're chasing this illusion. It's not really real. It's what the world has to offer to us. It lays it out there like there's substance, like there's something real to it, like it's going to satisfy you, like it's going to bring purpose.

[00:37:16] And you know, you chase it and you're just chasing a mirage. You're chasing this image and you're literally you're getting nowhere. Or God has called you to lay something down and and you're going through this process of denial or anger or you're bargaining with God. And you know, you're running in this circle and God is like, stop running in a circle, stop running in a circle. The thing you're chasing is a mirage. I mean, the fact is, in this life, God may never tell you why. God may never tell you why, and just and I'm not being insensitive because I know a lot of us have questions about things that really matter. Are they really hurt? But this process of you chasing the lie for an answer is not only a mirage, it is unbelievably unproductive in your relationship with the Lord. It is keeping you from taking steps of obedience and steps of faith. And you know, the the only way to get that cycle to stop and and listen, this is not like this is not a cycle that's just level. It's a vortex. It is a vortex that will pull you down. And the only way to stop it is for you to come to a faith conclusion, to settle the matter, to place it in the hands of God, to set it on the altar, to bind it and set it on the altar, along with all of the unanswered questions, along with the struggle that seems to to you to be unreasonable, along with the anger and the frustration and the unmet desires. Because you've been holding on to this thing that's been meeting some sort of need in your life and God has been saying to you, I didn't intend that for that.

[00:38:58] I didn't intend that for that. I intended me for that. That desire that need in your heart was never intended to be met by him or met by her. It's been intended to be met by me. And so, so so you need to listen. You need to lay it up on the altar and trust that God will do it. Listen, this is the conclusion he came to. He believed that he who promised was able to provide he who promised was able to provide, even if it meant that the thing needed to die so God could resurrect it from the dead. Are you? Are you willing to lay it on the altar? To make that faith conclusion, to stop the spending, because listen, when you do that, when you do it, it turns into worship, it turns into worship. He was prepared. He responded in obedience. But there was something that happened in his heart that turned this moment into worship. And I don't think that Abraham was was just exaggerating when he said to the servants, Hey, listen to loud and I. The lad, by the way, is probably 30 years old. I mean, anywhere from 18 to 30. Commentators say The Lord and I are going to the mountain to worship and we will come back. And in his mind, it's like God may need to raise him from the dead, but we will come back. When Abraham said worship, he meant worship. He meant worship. There was something that happened in Abraham's heart. There was a determination that he made. Abraham was not just being obedient on the outside while he was miserable and faithless on the inside. And sometimes our obedience is like that. You know, we're doing it. You know what, God? All right, I'm going to do it.

[00:40:42] You know, on the outside, we're complying, but on the inside, we are miserable and faithless. Is that really worship? Is that really worship? Or at least God's getting something? Well, that's not that's not all that God wants. You know, we're like that compliant little kid that's being obedient to their parent and following the command. But on the inside, they're raging with frustration and resentment, resentment. Sometimes our obedience, while obedience is good, sometimes it's filled with resentment and resentment will keep you from from worship. Obedience is better than disobedience, but worship is the best of all because worship is not only action, it's attitude. It's not only action, it's attitude. This in today. Let me let me just wrap this up by saying to you, God may not call you to do what Abraham was called to do. The fact is, he's not probably going to do that. I'm sure he's not going to do that, but I'm guaranteeing you if you belong to him, he's calling you to lay down something. If you really are a child of God in this life, there will always be something for you to lay down. Maybe today you're in this room, you're watching online. You're not a child of God. You've never put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ. There's been this thing that's been happening in your life that's prompting this desire you're seeking. You know, you're thinking thoughts about God you've never had before, and you're considering things like having a relationship with him, but you're you're resistant. Today, the word for you is this. Stop resisting God and trust in his son. Lay your life down because he laid his life down for you. But listen today, if you want to stop squabbling over the little things with God, you need to give him everything.

[00:42:31] Sometimes it's those little things that we're arguing with, and to solve that issue, what we just simply need to do is give him everything. If he doesn't have everything, it won't be easy, easy for you to lay down anything. If he doesn't have everything, it will not be easy for you to lay down anything. And this is what Paul meant when Paul wrote in Romans Chapter 12 verse one. I think, you know when Paul wrote these words, I don't know. I don't know if he was thinking of this moment in Genesis 22. I mean, for sure, the concept of sacrifice was was on his mind. He said this I appeal to you, therefore brothers and sisters by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. So he's he's like, Listen, I appeal. I beseech, I'm pleading with you, I'm begging you, I'm begging you. The apostle is saying, I want you to get this. You have to understand this. Don't tune me out. Don't turn the message off. Don't disregard what I'm saying to you by the mercies of God that you present your whole being body, mind, intellect, emotion and spirit. He's talking the totality of our being to offer it to God, to lay yourself your life on the altar, which is in fact our spiritual worship, the very expectation of God today. I'm not just saying lay a thing on the altar, I'm saying, lay yourself on the altar. There may be a thing, there may be a thing that, you know, God has been compelling you to let go of. To. Reorder the hierarchy of love in your life. But it may not just be a thing that you need to lay down, you may need to lay your whole self down.

[00:44:20] Now listen, you might be thinking today, Well, why would I do that? Why would I do that? And my answer to you is this I think Abraham could have hardly imagined that in this moment, he was laying down the greatest picture in the Old Testament of the gospel. He could have. He could have never imagined. Right. We read this in hindsight, and as we read the story, we think for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but should have everlasting life. Like, I mean, we when we read this, we think of John 3:16. The terminology, the typology, the phrase, the phrasing of what happens in Genesis 22 is a picture of like it is a foreshadow God is laying the groundwork. God is implanting this image in our mind through this small story that ultimately would point to the greatest story of God, the father delivering his own son to a cross so that the faith in him, you and I might be born again, that the chains and the power of sin might be broken in our lives. Think about the typology here. Isaac was a son that was loved by the father. Jesus was a son loved by his father. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son, the father God. The father sacrificed his son. Abraham and Isaac walked up to Mariah together. The father in Christ went together. Isaac offered on Mount Mariah. Jesus was crucified on the very same mountain. Isaac carried the weight of the altar. Jesus carried the weight of the cross. Isaac was laid on the altar. Jesus was nailed to the cross. Isaac submitted to Abraham Jesus submitted to the father. Isaac was silent.

[00:46:10] The Bible says as a lamb that was led to the slaughter. So he opened, not speaking of Jesus. So he opened his mouth. The Bible says, and Abraham, speaking to a service that God would provide a lamb and John 01:29 says, Behold the lamb of God that was slain for the world. Look, when we connect the dots together, what we discover is this that God did this for us because he loves us. God did this for us because he loves us. I mean, there's this amazing narrative that he's written across the history of time to declare his great love for us. And this is the response, the response for us individually. And listen, I'm speaking collectively to you now, but understand God's spirit is speaking to you directly just as just as God, said Abraham. God is speaking your name. God is speaking your name right now. God has this message for you because he wants you to connect the dots here. And the first thought, Is this God? You did this because you love me? And the second thought, Is this because of love? I'm laying this on the altar God because of love. I'm laying my life on the altar God. Not because of guilt, not because of shame, not because my wife has been brow beating me. Right. Not because I want to pacify my conscience, not because I want some relief from the shame that I've been dealing with God, not today because I want to compartmentalize you and put you in this place and just access you when I want you or when I need you. God, not because of that, but because I know you love me now in response, in a love response to you. Father, I am laying.

[00:47:50] I know that to follow Christ means that I have to lay my life completely down. And I need you to set you as the greatest love of my life. It's a love response to him. Are you willing to make that today? Are you willing to take the thing that you've been holding on to and clinging to that is that that maybe was a blessing that God desired for you, but now is in a way dethroned him from your heart or has become an infection taking a place that God does not desire. Are you willing to lay that on the altar today? Are you willing to lay down your life afresh in a new because this is the right response to the gospel for us. Let's pray together. And father, thank you. God, we are so grateful for Jesus, your son and. We don't want to miss today the message that you have for us. God, we don't want your word to fall on deaf ears. God, we don't want your word just to pass through. And so please buy your spirit, we pray. Settle your word in our heart and help us. Help us to know that we've received it by being obedient, by walking in faith. And by worshiping you. Today, we're going to close our service a little differently than normal and. And what we're going to do is this we're going to have the follow up leaders come forward today and they're going to stand right in front of the stage, and Tony is going to lead us in a song of worship. And you know, today, if you've not put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ, we want to encourage you to come forward. You know, if the stage was an altar and sometimes it's called an altar.

[00:49:46] You know, if the stage was an altar of the stage, this area is a place for you symbolically to acknowledge that you're coming to Christ in faith, that you're choosing to turn away from a life of unbelief and sin, and to respond to the love of the father for you by receiving his son, by saying yes to Jesus. Trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Because that is the reason the father sent the son that that wall of sin that existed between yourself and him would be wiped away, and that you would have communion and unity with God forever. Because a faith in Jesus, he was crucified on the cross for you who was dead and buried, and he victoriously rose again in the third day. And today, maybe you've been chasing an illusion that the world has set before you. This idea that somehow these things in the world can satisfy your heart, and the fact is this you've been running in circles that can stop today. If you make a faith conclusion and trusting Christ today, maybe as a Christian, you know, there's a thing that there's a thing that. You've been holding on to and maybe it is something that's just ungodly. Maybe even wicked and evil, and today God is saying to you, do you love me more than this? Do you love me more than this? Will you lay this thing down? Maybe for you today. Maybe there's a there's a good thing that God is blessed with the blessed you with. And and yet there's a place it's taken in your life that only God deserves to have one encourage you today as Tony leads us into Song of worship to come forward, to come down to the altar.

[00:51:33] Want to lead you in prayer? Maybe today you just need to re consecrate your life to the Lord. Maybe today it's not a thing, but maybe it's your whole self and you need to once again say, like Abraham said, God, here, here I am. Here I am. You know, maybe your walk has been good, but it could be better. And there's a step for you to take today, let's all stand together. This morning, and we just want to encourage you as you consider those things, as Pastor Tony leads us into Song of worship want you to come down to the front today. Maybe you're giving your life to Christ for the first time. Maybe there's a thing that you've been holding on to, and the fact is it's been holding on to you. You need to let go and release it to the Lord. Trust him with it. Come forward today. Maybe today is a Christian. You need to re consecrate your life to God. You need to stop playing games with him. Come forward right now. I want to lead you in prayer.