

# 4 – Surrender to Me and Multiply // Genesis 22:1–18 // Multiply #4

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I think I've told you before about one sophomore in one of our local colleges who stressed all semester in anticipation of the notoriously difficult final exam in his ornithology class. (**You know ornithology? The study of birds.**)

**Having made what he regarded to be the “ultimate effort for this final exam,”** he was dismayed when he walked into the classroom to take the test because instead of the multiple choice, essay-based questions on bird he had been expecting, there were no test materials at all—just 25 pictures on the screen. **Not photos of different birds in all their resplendent color, just pictures of birds' feet.** The test was to identify all 25 species of birds by their feet.

“This is insane,” the student protested.

“It must be done,” said the professor. “This is the final.”

“I won't do it,” the frustrated student said. “I'm walking out.”

“If you walk out, you fail the final.”

“Go ahead and fail me,” said the boy, heading for the door.

“Okay, you have failed. Tell me your name,” the professor demanded.

The boy pulled up his pant legs and said, “You tell me, professor, you tell me!”

We all know what it's like to take a test that didn't accurately reflect what we knew.

Throughout Abraham's life God we see God testing him again and again to prove what is really in him.

“Abraham, do you **really** believe me? Do you really **trust** me? Are you really ready to follow me **anywhere?**”

- **Think about it:** Why didn't God immediately give Abraham his son, and IMMEDIATELY whisk him away to the Promised Land, the very moment he agreed to follow him?
  - Instead, he has to wait for **30–40 years for his son,** wandering along this circuitous journey fraught with **dangers and heartbreaks and setbacks.**
- **Why?** And this is important—because God was not just trying to take Abraham **somewhere,** he was trying to make Abraham **into someone.**
  - What God is **doing *in* you, YOU SEE,** is just as important as what he is doing through you.
  - God **desires not just to take us to heaven;** he wants to **put heaven into us.**

So that's what this MULTIPLY season is all about. God **not only wanting to multiply the ministry wide** through us, but **multiplying faith and surrender** in us.

## Genesis 22

And so, in **Genesis 22,** we see Abraham go through another test, this one **by far the most difficult** he's ever faced.

By **Genesis 22,** Abraham has had his miracle baby.

- **They call him “Isaac,”**—which means **“son of laughter”**—because this whole thing is **just funny,** and they all seem to **understand** that...

- **Think about it:** Abraham and Sarah were **both 100** when Isaac was born, **which meant that that year for their birthdays**, Abraham and Isaac both got diapers...

**Ge 22:1** *After these things* (after all the birth things... when Isaac is now about 15) **God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I."**

("Here am I" is **not just Hebrew for "hello."** It is a way of saying, "I stand ready for your command." It is a statement of surrender.)

To be frank, I find that reaction **pretty remarkable**, considering that every time God has called Abraham up to this point he seems to ask him to **leave something good**, give up **something he cherishes**, or **attempt something impossible**.

- **I'll be honest—I'd be tempted to be like,** *"Oh no, God is calling again, what does he want this time?"*

**Be honest:** *Some of you thought that in this series, didn't you? "Oh no, God, what do you want this time?"*

- **I remember in college there was this missions speaker at our church that was so persuasive I dreaded to hear him speak because I just knew God was going to call me to the mission field.**
- **I remember a friend asking** who was speaking at church that weekend and it was this guy and he said **"Oh great... get ready for conviction."**
- *You felt like this in this series?*

**Abraham says, "Here am I" because he trusts God.** The difference in a life of drudgery and a life of joy is whether you trust Jesus.

- *Tis so sweet, to trust in Jesus, just to take him at his word, just to rest, upon his promise—just to know, "Thus says the Lord!"*
- **You show me a happy Christian**, and I'll show you one who has learned to trust... Show me a faltering Christian, and I'll show you one who has yet to learn how good God is and how committed he is to us.

**2** (So God) **He said, "Take your son,** (scholars tell us that the language here **suddenly slows down dramatically**. You see, up until now the story of Abraham has progressed at a **pretty fast clip**. (And this happened, and then *that*. **But then**, here in chapter 22, the pace just slams to a crawl. You should almost read it) **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."**

- What God is saying here **seems unbelievable**. It **reverberates** through Abraham's soul.
  - The **word for 'son' in Hebrew, 'ben,'** is used 10 times, **over and over and over** again. *Your son. Your only son. The son that you love.*
- You see, this **child represented everything** to Abraham.
  - This was **the child of promise**; this is what they'd left everything for!
  - **All their hopes and all their dreams** and affections centered upon this child.
  - And now, as an old man, this is all Abraham **really loves and lives for** the in the world anymore!
    - **(Because he was old and very rich,** I'm sure he probably didn't do a lot each day except play with Isaac.)
    - And God says, **"Offer him up to me** as a burnt offering!"
- I know you may ask the question, **"How could God ask something like this?"** and I'll deal with that in a moment... but for now just **know that you could let this represent** that one thing that we **treasure and trust** most in life. That **one thing that makes life worth living** for you.
- As the text proceeds, you'll notice **no one is talking**—there is only silence.
- What is there that if you lost it, **you would be speechless?**

**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.~~ (The **third day!** I think in 3 days I would have talked myself out of this.)

Some of you **know what it's like to begin so well** in faith, **only to falter** on day 2 or 3.

**Maybe you are there now:**

- ~~God called you to **break off a bad relationship** to honor him, and you did, but now you are bitter at him for asking you to do so.~~
- ~~He **called you to a ministry assignment**, but you're not seeing the fruit and now you are angry at him...~~
  - ~~It was **supposed to be all warm fuzzies** and goose bumps but it isn't...~~
- ~~God led you to make a **financial sacrifice**, but it has **gotten hard**... and now you're **mad at him** for what you feel like you are missing out on.~~

That kind of faith comes not from persuasiveness of the speaker, or the strength of your character that keeps you going; it comes from somewhere different...

**5** Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and **worship** (interesting word he chose) and (we will) come again to you."

- **We:** Abraham was convinced that somehow they were both coming back.
- **God had a promise to fulfill** and he didn't know how it would work out, but he knew that it would.

**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!" 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.**"

**Now we see what Abraham has been doing for 3 days** in that dark silence. He's been reminding himself of the **promises of God**.

- He was probably **recounting the encounter in Genesis 15** where God took responsibility for both sides of the covenant. Rehearsing... you promised.
- **Important: What drove Abraham up the mountain** was not the strength of his character; it was not Abraham saying, "I can do it..." but "God is faithful."
- **The only thing that can drive you onward**, as a husband, a father, in ministry, through difficult times, through financial hardship—**onward on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day**, is **not the strength of your character** but an unwavering conviction in the goodness and promises of God.
- **Even the youths should falter, and the strongest young men shall fall, but those who wait...**

**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.

- By the way, **kudos to Isaac** here. **If Isaac were strong enough to carry the wood**, he definitely would have been strong enough to evade or overcome a frail old man. (Remember, scholars say he was **at least 15**)
- Here he is **crawling up on the altar**, trusting God and his dad. Would your teenager do that?
- The **only way Isaac would do this** is he **had inherited trust in God from his daddy**. He **heard his daddy talk** about it all the time; **saw him live** it out. And his **daddy's trust in God caught fire** in his heart.
- This kind of faith is **caught, not taught**.
- **Will how you live and how you give and how you obey teach your children to trust God?**

**10** Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

- Now, let me take a moment to address the question many of you asked a moment ago, **“How could God command something like this?”**
- This was **not just a command to murder** Isaac. If so, Abraham could just have *stabbed him* in the tent.
- Something **much deeper** is going on. **The offering of the firstborn in the Old Testament symbolized the debt man owed to God.** Throughout the Old Testament, God lays claim to our firstborn because it represents our very lives.
  - In the **Hebrew sacrificial** system, God required the **first-born of the cattle or sheep** to be sacrificed to him, as well as the **first fruits** of the grain.
  - The **only way that you could spare** the life of the firstborn was to make a sacrifice in its place.<sup>1</sup>
  - **At the Passover**, God killed the firstborn of every household that did not have the blood of a firstborn lamb on the doorpost.
  - **In other words, the life of the first-born was forfeit** unless some sort of redeeming sacrifice was made.
  - **God was showing that there is a debt that every family owes to me, and it goes to your very lives.**<sup>2</sup>

***That’s why Abraham understood what God was asking of him. Tim Keller says, “If Abraham had thought God had told him, ‘Kill Sarah, and then I know you love me,’ he would have never done that—he would have concluded that he was hallucinating because God would not have commanded senseless murder like that. And God would not have said it because it would have been murder. But when God said, ‘offer Isaac,’ Abraham knew exactly what that meant. The firstborn. (It represented his very life and the debt every man owes to God.)”***

Well, with the knife is suspended in the air, **11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.”**

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 22; Numbers 3, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Keller, “Real Faith and the Only Son.”

**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.”

**Abraham proved himself.** He passed the test. He showed that there was nothing he would not trust to God; there was nowhere he would not go with God.

**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.”

**What you name a place is extremely significant in Hebrew literature,** because it encapsulates or summarizes the significance of what happened there. Isn’t it interesting that they call this place, “The Lord provides,” and not “How Abraham obeyed?”

**You see, something more important than Abraham’s impressive obedience is demonstrated to us here.** And it was God’s commitment to us.

**You see, centuries later, another Son, another one and only Son whom the Father loved,** would walk up a mountain. And again, **that Son would willingly** crawl up on the wood.

- **This time, however, the knife would** not be stopped in mid-air. It would slash straight through the heart of Jesus.
  - **BTW,** these “mountains of Moriah” were right outside of Jerusalem and **scholars tell us that these mountains** were precisely where **Calvary would have been.**
- In other words, **on the very mountain** where Jesus would die, a **drama was enacted** hundreds of years before Jesus came.

- **It is as if Abraham plays the part of God**, and Isaac played the part of Christ, but **only up until the moment** that God stops the sacrifice and points to the lamb caught in the thorn bushes.
- **By the way**, the ram caught in the thorn bushes was **caught by his horns**, which means his body was unblemished.
- **More than 1000 years later**, Jesus would walk up this same mountain; but this time no substitute lamb would be provided, because he **was himself the unblemished lamb**.
  - He would **willingly stay on the altar** as the Father plunged the knife of justice for our sins into his chest.
  - And **because of that we could know** that the Father loves us since he has not withheld “his son, his only son,” from us.
- **You see, this story is not first and foremost** about Abraham’s commitment to God; it’s about **God’s commitment** to Abraham.
  - That’s **WHY** the mountain was commemorated as, “The Lord will provide,” not “How Abraham obeyed.”
  - **When it is all said and done, and you look backwards over your life**, the thing that will stand out is not your great sacrifices for God, but his **steadfast faithfulness to you**.
- **And the more you see that now, the more willing you will come to obey**. When you see that God has not withheld his Son, his only Son, the Son that he loves, for you, what possibly could you withhold from him?

Now, watch what happens: 15 And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, **because** you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore... 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, **because** you have obeyed my voice.”

**Because** Jesus obeyed, we are saved.

By extension, **because** we obey, others are saved. Our faith and obedience are the means by which God multiplies us on earth.

**Have you noticed in this story that nearly every time** Abraham trusts and obeys, God renews and intensifies the promise? It’s not that God needs an Isaac...

**Because** Abraham obeyed, God multiplied him like the stars of the sky and **you and I sit here** as a couple of those stars!

If we obey, others will enter the kingdom *through* that obedience. Mind blowing.

## (2 Questions)

Which leads me to 2 questions I want to ask you...

### 1. Do you understand the gospel?

- Christianity is not PRIMARILY ABOUT how you must obey God, but what God did for you.
  - Jesus is the Son who obeyed perfectly, who would die in your place so you could go free. You only have to believe and receive this.
  - ~~I’ve compared coming to Christ like waking up in an ambulance... not saving yourself through perfect obedience~~
- Your whole life is a response... the hymn writer probably said it best:
  - When I survey...
  - See, from his head, his hands, his feet...
  - Were the whole realm...
  - Demands: This is not demands like a tyrant demands, but demands and in “deserves.”

## 2. In response, are you fully surrendered in all things to him?

- In response to what God has done for you, have you offered yourself as a living sacrifice back to him? **BLANK CHECK?**
- The **point is not just that you identify your Isaac and give it to him as if that is what God needs from you**, but that you give him all things, including your Isaac.
- Your Isaac **represents that one thing that makes full surrender** difficult for you?

I mentioned the first week of our series that **I had preached on Abraham several years ago**... almost a decade now, and there was a couple sitting off toward the right in Riverside High School named Curt and Hilary Alan. At the time, they had 2 rising teenagers:

“One Sunday during this series on Abraham, J.D. talked about surrender. He had us hold out our hands with our palms facing up. He told us to visualize what was most important to us, what we’d be willing to die for.

My immediate response? I would die for my husband and children.

‘Now,’ J.D. said, ‘Squeeze your hands with the amount of firmness representing how much you want to hold on to whatever you visualized in your hands.’ My knuckles turned white because these were the people who meant more to me than anything!

Then J.D. said, ‘If you are willing to give whatever it is in your hands to the Lord, regardless of what that means for you, then you open your hands, again, palms facing up, and say, “Lord, they are Yours. Do with them what You will because I release them to You. They’re not mine, anyway. They are Yours.”’

Although this may seem like a very simple... exercise, it ended up being significant for me. (In that moment I literally let go), not just

of our jobs and possessions, but of the control I mistakenly thought I had over my children’s lives.”<sup>3</sup>

**The point is not that God needs your Isaac.** The point is that *every single part of your life*, in response to the gospel, has been offered back, without restriction, to God.

## Our Offering to God

You see, Abraham’s offering on this mountain **encapsulates** the things **we’ve said should characterize our offering to God** during this season of **Multiply**.

**When you fill out this card, these things should be reflected on it:**

### A. Faith

- What we give is supposed to feel like a risk. Seed. Abraham.
  - C.S. Lewis: only safe rule
- What Abel offered... “God, you get the first... I’ll trust *you* to provide”

### B. Sacrifice

- Abraham gave his first and best... what meant the most to him
- King David... offering is not about meeting God’s needs, but about making a statement.
  - You see, for some of you, you might be able to give a gift that would look huge on the balance sheet, but to you it is not meaningful, your first and your best.
  - **100 K might be a huge gift, but it is crumbs to the guy with 10 million** at his disposal
- “*God measures generosity not by the size of the gift but by the size of the sacrifice.*”<sup>4</sup>
  - Does what we offer to God show that we love him, like Abraham’s offering did?

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<sup>3</sup> Hilary Alan, *Sent*.

<sup>4</sup> Chip Ingram

- **Stamps, Jamie Warren:** *One of the guys from Wake wanted to be able to give an offering but doesn't have access to money but had some postage stamps so he put those in the offering on Sunday. He mentioned it to me that the church may think it was crazy but he assumed the church mails stuff out and could use them.*
  - **2 MITES**
  - I repeat: **"God measures generosity not by the size of the gift but by the size of the sacrifice and the depth of obedience."**
  - DOES WHAT YOU DO show God you love him, and bless the heart of God, like Abraham's offering did?

### C. Full Surrender

- **And this may be most important...** Full and total surrender.
- **Surrender, you see, is different than sacrifice.** You can make big sacrifices and still be in control. **Surrender is different than obedience.** You can obey a lot of the laws of God and not be surrendered.
  - **Aren't some of us like that**—you are good Christians, you are active in church, but there is an Isaac that God is still not in charge of?
- **Surrender is A BLANK CHECK without restrictions...** all I have, all I am, all I ever hope to be...
- Surrender is **like a dye that bleeds through everything.** It *affects* your sacrifices and your obedience, but surrender is deeper than that.
  - **I've always thought of it like this...** if you eat eggs and bacon for breakfast, both the chicken and the egg contributed a part. But in different ways. The chicken made a contribution; but the pig, however, was surrendered.
- **Surrender is the response of a grateful heart** that says, "God you gave everything for me and without you I have nothing, so in response here is all that I have!"
- **What God asks you to do in this season** will be different than what he asks me or anyone else to do.

- **So the question is not, "What is someone else doing?"** or, "What is God asking of them?" but "What does GOD want from ME?"
- It is really important in this season that you ask God what he wants and do that and not compromise.
  - **Lance at CHC: Ishmael?** Isaac was the son God asked for.

### Walk Through Card

**Guest at church? Not talking to you.**

**Total giving in 2 years... not over and above.** Should represent **full surrender**; your **first and best** that we talked about last week; **faith** and **sacrifice**.

**Stored resources:** Exercise: **5 most expensive things** that you might consider releasing from an earthly investment and go to a heavenly investment. My challenge is for you to list them out and ask God: *Do you want one of these?* Examples

- Car
- Mountain bike
- ½ of retirement
- Collection
- One of our kids this weekend: toy

**Again, I don't use those examples as some kind of standard.** God hasn't called me to do each of those things.

**It's just an exercise.** The real question is, "Is your all, your Isaac, on the altar?"

***This whole thing is not about meeting the needs of God; he has no needs. It is about us having total control and dominance in our HEARTS.***

*This is about a response of **WORSHIP**.*

**My story...** V and I have been here obviously for many years... Last time we felt like we redlined.

- But we are **asking these questions again**. *What does it look like in this season to “give our **first and best**,” “give by **faith**,” give in a way that is a **sacrifice that declares** how much we love him and that **reflects full and complete surrender** to the leadership of the Spirit?*

**Now, I have explained to you, if this is a problem for you...** If you are so cynical you feel like you can't trust us, I've told you that I'd prefer...

- **I say that for 2 reasons**
  - **Calling your bluff**
  - If you really did have a bad experience... I don't want to let us get in the way of you being a fully generous disciple of Jesus
- **But listen... that's not a healthy place to be.** *God's plan A for reaching the world is the local church, and you should be a part of a church.*
- **We are very transparent and open here** about where every dime of what we receive goes.
  - We are under the direction of **local, lay leaders** here who oversee all that we do and every dime we spend.
- **Part of learning to trust God is extending that trust to the group** of his people he's led you to join yourselves with.
- **So if you are cynical**, I hope you'll ask the questions you need to ask and get healing so you can join up with God's people with full and open abandon!

**Summit, God is doing something amazing here...** multiplying his ministry wide through us. **What happens in this season** is going to change our city, and the eternities of thousands of people and families.

So many people at ACN. All of our staff has committed. Staff committed 2.6 million!

**Now this week you are being asked to take this card and listen to God yourself** and *join this group that says, “Yes, God, we go forward.”*

Let me pray for you:

(CAMPUS PASTORS COME FOR COMMUNION)