

Altared

Scripture and Background Information for October 22-28.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

Abraham is known as one of the fathers of our faith, but his faith was not perfect. At moments, he believed in God wholeheartedly and was willing to be incredibly obedient to God while, in others, he let fear and selfishness drive his actions. In this series, we will study the life of Abraham, all the successes and failures, to see how we may relate to his relationship with God. Ultimately, we hope to learn how each of us can direct the devotion of our lives to God, so that we allow Him to determine the destination of our journeys.

Background for Genesis 22:1-14:

Leading up to the events in Genesis 22, everything looks like it is falling in place for Abraham and his family. He has seen almost all the promises of God fulfilled since he lives in the promised land, has been greatly blessed, and has received a son, Isaac, through his wife, Sarah. It seems as if Abraham can sit back in the land God has given him and enjoy watching his descendants become as numerous as the stars in the sky while they bless each other and the world around them. But God has a test for Abraham.

The Lord tells Abraham to take Isaac, the son of promise who he loves, and sacrifice him on an altar. This must have seemed incredibly counterintuitive. In this instance, obedience to God seemed like it would take Abraham far away from the blessing and promise of God. Why would Abraham ever go along with this? How could He trust in God's promises whenever it seemed like God was commanding him to ruin them? Ultimately, Abraham trusted in God's faithfulness to His promises so much that He knew God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead if He needed to (Hebrews 11:19). Abraham took Isaac, built an altar, but as he was about to follow through with the sacrifice, God stopped him and provided a ram to sacrifice instead. Because of Abraham's obedience, God reiterated the promises to him, proving that God is faithful even when His promises and His commands don't seem like they will lead to His blessing.

Insights and questions to engage with the text:

1. Why does God test Abraham in this way? What does God reveal about Himself in this story?
2. If someone were to ask you about God's faithfulness, how would you describe it? From your own life, what examples would you use to explain God's faithfulness to you?
3. Like Abraham, it is often hard to continually trust in the Lord's faithfulness to us. How can we encourage each other consistently to remember God's faithfulness to us?

*Check back in with your groups about the rhythm of silence and solitude. Ask how their times in silence and solitude have been and what God has been showing them in those moments.