



Life Group Study Notes

“Don't Worry, This Is Just A Test”

Ps. James Lowe - June 19, 2016

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- What is one of the hardest school tests you have taken? Why was it hard? What was the value of taking it?
- Why do you think a teacher would give an open book test? Do you think an open book test defeats the purpose of testing? Why or why not?
- What's one of the biggest disciplinary measures you remember receiving as a child? What did you learn from it?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Abraham was promised a son by God in his old age. Yet Abraham was required to wait in faith. At one point, his wife became impatient and wanted him to take one of the servants as his wife and so have a child. Abraham was tested in his faith, and he failed. This resulted in the birth of Ishmael, and in much strife in his home. Because Abraham failed the test, many trials and troubles ensued even for future generations.

Paul refers to this episode in Abraham's life in Galatians 4:21-31. This passage teaches us, among other things, that only that which is born of the Spirit of God bears lasting spiritual fruit. Whatever is born of the flesh (that is, self-reliance apart from God's Spirit) will never yield the fruit which pleases God.

Note: It is important for us to learn to trust God and do what his Word and his Spirit lead us to do, and not to grow impatient and attempt to take matters into our own hands and try by our own wisdom and strength to shape our lives.

After some time Abraham and his wife Sarah had the son born to them that God had originally promised to them. After several years, God tested Abraham.

Genesis 22:1-18 ESV

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 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.

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again

to you." 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.

And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. 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. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 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." 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. 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."

And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 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. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

Abraham passed God's test. Though he had fallen short before, this time he demonstrated great trust in God. God's response was to bless him with an extraordinary reminder of his purposes and promises for Abraham.

Note: God will likewise bless us when we trust him and do what he tells us to do. Throughout our lives we will have many opportunities to trust God when there is pressure and temptation to take matters into our own hands. When we trust him, we will enjoy God's favor and blessings. When we fail, God doesn't reject us, but we do bring unnecessary trouble into our lives.

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related point for discussion.

- What test from God did you pass, and what were the consequent blessings?
- What test from God did you fail? What were the consequences? Were you able to pass the same essential test at a later time?
- Do you believe you are going through a time of testing right now?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray for discernment and wisdom from God to know when you are being tested and how to respond.
- Pray for grace and strength to pass any test you or a loved one or friend might be going through right now.
- Pray for prophetic insight to know how to help anyone you know may be going through a time of testing right now.