

# Monday - Week Five

## Lesson twelve: The supreme test of Abraham's faith

Read: Genesis 21:1 - 22:19

**Summary:** Abraham experienced a fierce test of his faith and showed that his faith indeed was rooted in God and in His promises.

### Background and Comments

- Abraham and Sarah drove Hagar and Ishmael out of their home. Why did they do such a mean thing? Galatians 4:29 tells us that Ishmael persecuted young Isaac. Sarah must have realized his their presence would hurt the spiritually positive environment they were trying to create for Isaac. It's noteworthy to see that God condoned of their departure and then took care of Hagar and Ishmael when they left.
- Isaac was a teenager when he was placed on the altar while his father was well over 100 years old. Isaac probably allowed his father to place him on the altar (because he could have overpowered Abraham if he had wanted to). In any case, we wonder what sort of an impact this had on young Isaac.

### Lessons for Today

- Sarah had grown in her faith since the day she laughed at the thought she would have a baby. She said (21:6): *God has brought me laughter*. She knew that God had kept His promise. Can you look back on your life and see times when you have grown in your faith after a certain event happened? What are areas in which your faith can grow stronger right now?
- Everything seemed to be going well for Abraham and his little family ... until God shook everything up with THE TEST. Why did God put Abraham through this extremely difficult time? Perhaps God wanted Abraham to realize that he needed to love Him more than his son. Are there things or people that threaten to slip into the number one position in your life?
- In Genesis 22:16 God swore "by Himself" that Abraham would be blessed. When God swears "by Himself" we can be double sure that His promise is sure. God has "sworn by Himself" that our sins are forgiven.

**Read:** Psalm 21; Matthew 21.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, give me an extra measure of Your Spirit to triumph in the tests of faith that I face. In Jesus' name; Amen.

## Tuesday - Week Five

### Lesson thirteen: The last days of Abraham

Read: Genesis 23:1 - 25:10

**Summary:** Sarah died before her son found a wife. The choice of a wife for Isaac had a spiritual element to it. Abraham knew how important this choice was so he sent his most trusted servant to do the job.

#### Background and Comments

- Abraham called himself an “alien and stranger” in the land when he bought a place for Sarah to be buried. Abraham knew that he was an “alien and stranger” in more than one way. His real home was heaven; Hebrews 11:10 tells us that Abraham longed for the permanent home he had in heaven.
- Abraham’s servant impresses us quite a bit. Not only did he ask Abraham questions before he undertook this mission (he knew how important this task was so he asked his master for clarification on some things) he asked God to bless his efforts. God certainly answered his prayers quickly!

#### Lessons for Today

- When we read about the arranged marriage of Isaac and Rebekah we are tempted to shake our heads in astonishment. Yet we do need to admit that the institution of marriage fared much better then as compared to now. Abraham knew that his son’s spouse’s spiritual life was very important; their child would carry on the line of the Savior! Abraham sent his servant to his homeland to find a wife for Isaac instead of choosing one from the heathens around him. How do we help our young people in understanding what is important as they begin choosing their life’s partner?
- After Sarah died Abraham remarried. Abraham’s distribution of his wealth to his relatives was a God-pleasing and common sense approach. He gave Isaac everything he owned (as he should have; God had told him that Isaac was his heir); yet he also gave gifts to his other sons before he died (which was good because he had a responsibility to them as well).

**Read:** Psalm 22; Matthew 22.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, when Abraham died his relatives came together to mourn his death. When those close to us die we also mourn their departure. Teach us to mourn as those who have hope. Also help us to remember the faithful Christians who have gone before us. Amen.

# Wednesday - Week Five

## Catechism Review

Read Questions 13-17

1. What is the purpose of the law? (Hint: SOS)

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2. What is the purpose of the Gospel? (Hint: SOS)

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3. A popular acronym on bracelets is WWJD (What would Jesus do?). Is this law or Gospel? Explain.

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How would you respond: "Whenever I get in trouble I look at my bracelet and ask myself: 'What would Jesus do?'. It really helps me and gives me peace."

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4. How would you respond: "The Bible is a good book I guess. It has really helped to control people's behavior over the centuries."

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5. Why is the Gospel useless without the law?

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**Read:** Psalm 23; Matthew 23.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, give me the spiritual insight necessary to correctly apply the law and Gospel in my own life and in the lives of others. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.



# Thursday - Week Five

## Lesson Fourteen: Isaac blessed Jacob

Read: Genesis 25:11 - 28:4

**Summary:** God's will was done despite a father who disobeyed God, a mother and brother who deceived, and another brother who despised spiritual matters.

### Background and Comments

- Esau and Jacob were as different as night and day. Esau loved the adventures of the outdoors while Jacob loved the quiet, contemplative life of a herdsman. Esau had no time for spiritual matters (he didn't hesitate to sell his birthright for a bowl of soup). Jacob's spiritual life was active but quite misguided (he was willing to lie so that God's will would be done).
- God told Rebekah that He was going to especially bless her younger son instead of her older son. This follows a general principle in the Bible we find played out again and again. God's grace often does not follow the ways of the world. God has a way of lifting up the weaker people.
- This account is another example of God's ability to use even the mistakes we humans make for our own good. Amazing grace!

### Lessons for Today

- Isaac's family was messed up. He and Rebekah had favorite sons. Isaac loved Esau ... perhaps because Esau was everything he wasn't (Esau seems to be outgoing, adventuresome, etc.). Rebekah had a kindred spirit in her son (both were spiritual people). Communication doesn't seem to have been a strength in this family either. If you had been a family counselor for this family what would you have told them? What lessons can you learn for your own family?
- Some Bible scholars think that Isaac was planning to split his inheritance between his children by giving Jacob the spiritual portion (the Messianic promise) and Esau the physical portion (wealth, etc.). That might be true. If so, Isaac was trying to blend God's will and his will into one. Are there times when you try to do the same thing?

**Read:** Psalm 24; Matthew 24.

**Prayer:** Dear Heavenly Father, bless the families in our congregation. Help all of us to keep our eyes on Your Word and Your will for our lives. Let us grow stronger in our love for one another. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

# Friday - Week Five

## Life Questions

Topic/Question: How can I prepare to receive the Lord's Supper?

### Bible References and Considerations

- 1 Corinthians 11:27-28 give us a command and a warning. God warns us not to receive the Lord's Supper in an unworthy way (by failing to recognize our sin or the forgiveness offered with the Lord's body and blood). God tells us to examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's Supper. We need to ask ourselves:
  1. Am I a sinner who needs the Lord's forgiveness?
  2. Does the Lord offer us forgiveness in the Lord's Supper (given along with the Lord's body and blood)?

In other words, we are prepared because we believe what God tells us in the Bible. Faith prepares us to receive the Lord's Supper.

### Practically Speaking

- In ages past many people fasted before they received the Lord's Supper. The fact that they were hungry reminded them how much they needed the best "food" of all: the forgiveness of sins. If this (or any other physical custom) helps you then do it. The danger comes when we begin to think that we have to prepare in that way; then we are trying to earn God's blessings.
- Our hymnal has several excellent resources to help us get ready for communion:
  1. Prayers on page 11 (before and after communion)
  2. Personal Preparation for Communion on page 156.
  3. The Private Confession on pages 154 and 155 could be used.

Our Catechism has an excellent review of the truths of God's Word in the form of "Christian questions" on page 331-334.

- Lest we begin thinking that we have to have elaborate communion preparation it's good to remember that Martin Luther once wrote that pinching yourself is a good way to prepare for the Lord's Supper. If it hurts then we know that we are still alive and are sinners. We need God's love and forgiveness.

Read: Psalm 25; Matthew 25.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of the Lord's Supper. Amen.