



Writing Life Faith



For His Glory: Isaac

The Life of Isaac.

"Then the LORD said to him, 'No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.' Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, 'Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!'" (Genesis 15:4-5)

Last week, I started a new series about young people living for God's glory. This series was inspired by everyone I saw serving God at camp (which is why I've included a Camp Staff testimony with each post). We began the series with Abel, and today, we're jumping forward a few hundred years to Isaac.

Since Abel's death, generations have come and gone. The Tower of Babel was built, the Flood wiped out humanity (minus Noah's family), and Abraham was called to a new land. There, God made a promise to this old man. He would have a son. Despite Abraham taking matters into his own hands and failing miserably, God delivered. Isaac was born in Abraham's 100th year.

Today, we'll jump into the life of young Isaac, zooming in on his birth and the famous scene on Mount Moriah. I'd cover his entire life, but that's for another time.

Today we're using five 'A' words to learn about...

Isaac

Isaac's Actions.

That Isaac was even born is a miracle. God promised Abraham that his descendants would number as many as the stars. Yet time went by, and Abraham had no children. So he and Sarah took things into their own hands, and Abraham had a child with Hagar. This wasn't the answer God was looking for, and it caused a lot of problems. Nonetheless, Isaac is born.

Sarah declares, *"God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age (Genesis 21:6-7)!"*

Imagine the surprise it must've been when God then tells Abraham, *"Take your son, your only son - yes, Isaac, whom you love so much - and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you (Genesis 22:2)."*

The next day, Abraham packs up and goes. One day, I'd like to reach that level of dependence on God. **Abraham trusted God so much that he was willing to sacrifice his son right away.** Isaac doesn't know what he's being asked to do, but he follows his father to Mount Moriah.

Isaac's Attitude.

When Isaac asks about the burnt offering, Abraham tells him the truth. At this moment, Isaac could've run away. He could've attacked Abraham and stopped him. We often think of Isaac as a ten-year-old in this story. He was actually closer to thirty. If he'd wanted to get away, he could have.

Instead, Isaac submits to his father. This isn't a lesson in blind obedience or throwing your life away. **Isaac chose *not* to escape hardship.** He didn't run away from massive challenges (even his own death). Isaac, like Jesus, submitted himself to his father and boldly walked into tribulation.

Isaac's Affliction.

So Isaac lies down on the altar, and Abraham ties him in place. Abraham puts the thing he loves most on the altar. Now crunch time arrives: *Is Abraham willing to sacrifice Isaac for God?* He picks up the knife and prepares to do it.

Before we finish Isaac's story, let's jump to a camp testimony about surrendering what we love to God...

"The first thing that God did through me this summer was an Abraham and Isaac kind of situation. In my previous summers, I was always diligently seeking after the next leadership role, going after where I could lead others next, where I could have that kind of higher role, that leadership role. I was always the younger one, searching for the higher role, and then this summer, the roles had completely flipped. I was now the old one, I had these leadership roles, God had given them all to me, and I had to learn how to now lay those down. It's one of those times when God gives us what we want, and we're now called to actually give it up, to lay that Isaac on the altar, to be willing to give it back to God."

Most of us won't be asked to sacrifice our children as a sign of devotion to God, but we will be asked to make sacrifices.

Isaac's Answer.

The moment before Abraham does the deed, an angel appears. (Incidentally, an angel also appeared to tell Abraham of Isaac's birth.) The angel says, *"Don't lay a hand on the boy! Do*

not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from Me even your son, your only son (Genesis 22:12)."

Abraham's faith stands firm through testing. But let's not overlook Isaac. He put his life on the line. Now I don't want us to get a wrong view of God, that He enjoys watching us suffer to prove we're loyal to Him. I don't think God enjoyed seeing Abraham take a knife to Isaac, or watching Job lose everything, or seeing His Son on the cross. **God does not like seeing us suffer, but He knows that true faith comes through suffering.** By suffering, Jesus came to know us. Therefore, we come to know Jesus through suffering.

Suffering isn't always a choice, but sacrifice is. Abraham and Isaac were prepared to offer what they loved to God - their relationship. They knew this choice would involve suffering, and yet they chose to make that sacrifice. Centuries later, on the same mountain, the LORD would do the same.

Isaac's Aftermath.

God may not reward sacrifice while on Earth, though He does in Abraham's case. For Isaac, He provided a substitute: a ram caught in a thicket. He then blessed Abraham for his willingness to sacrifice. The point is, suffering is unavoidable; sacrifice is a choice. God *commanded* Abraham to give up his son. Abraham *chose* to act sacrificially, not begrudgingly.

This may sound controversial, but the backbone of Christianity is not commands; it is choices. It is not rituals; it is reliance. It is not stipulations; it is sacrifice. To quote Albus Dumbledore from *Harry Potter*, "It is our choices...that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."

By no means am I implying that obeying commands, abiding by laws, and following instructions don't matter. They do. I want to emphasize that the heart behind your actions is as important as the actions themselves.

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus tells us, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"*

See, Abraham could've done the "right" thing by sacrificing Isaac. He could've done it out of obligation, with no love for God. I doubt Isaac would have been spared then. The posture of their hearts, their choice to surrender, is what God was after. Please don't be like the Pharisees, who nailed every law on the head, while their hearts sat unmoved "like whitewashed tombs".

Our Application.

Isaac goes on to live a long life. He marries Rebekah (another miraculous story), raises Esau and Jacob, becomes a prosperous farmer, deceives Abimelech (in the same fashion as his

father), and ends his life by blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Yeah, he made mistakes, but the lessons he learned early on set the course for his life. Isaac grew up depending on God. His life was a gift from the LORD.

I'll finish with a reflection question.

***Why are you serving God,
and are you doing it because of love, or another reason?***

I'd hate to see us miss the most important part of a relationship with God: love. One of the ways I love God is by keeping His commandments, but keeping God's commandments isn't the same thing as loving Him. I hope we all reach the stage where we're willing to give God everything, even what we prize most.

And at the end of our days, may people say of us what men said of Isaac in Genesis 26:28a...
"We saw clearly that the LORD was with you..."





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