



# Groups

## Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- ☐ These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- ☐ Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

## NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

## Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

## How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

*If your group meets over Zoom:*

- ☐ Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- ☐ Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

**Group Leader Support:**

- ☐ Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- ☐ If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

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## LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on October 29, 2023

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

### THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL – GENESIS 22:1-19



#### I. Introduction

For the past 2 months we've been exploring the roots of our faith by revisiting the opening chapters of *Genesis*, the book of beginnings. As we look to the future of our church, and our world, we are re-discovering God's founding vision for humankind and the world, and the part that we're meant to play in fulfilling that vision. So far we've considered:

- ☐ The Beginning of Everything
- ☐ The Beginning of Humankind
- ☐ The Beginning of Sin, Death and Grace
- ☐ The Beginning of Mission
- ☐ The Beginning of Sexuality, Marriage and Friendship
- ☐ The Beginning of Faith

Today we are going to conclude our series by exploring **The Beginning of the Gospel**. By “gospel” we mean the good news of new and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. And what we are going to discover is that the seeds of that gospel were planted thousands of years before Jesus ever appeared on the scene.

Questions: What does the ancient story of Abraham sacrificing Isaac mean for the NEW beginnings in our lives today?

Bottom Line: From the beginning, God was preparing to restore our broken relationship with Him through the sacrifice of His Son.

Let’s begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

### ***Main Scripture Readings:***

Genesis 22:1-19

**22** Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

<sup>2</sup> Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

<sup>3</sup> Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. <sup>5</sup> He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

<sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, <sup>7</sup> Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

<sup>8</sup> Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

<sup>9</sup> When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

<sup>12</sup> “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

<sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

<sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time <sup>16</sup> and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, ***that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,*** <sup>17</sup> I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

<sup>19</sup> Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

#### Hebrews 11:17-19

<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, <sup>18</sup> even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

#### John 3:16

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



## II. Group Discussion Questions:

1. The story of Genesis 22 begins as so, *"Some time later God tested Abraham"* (Gen 22:1). Pastor Bryan expounds that God's purpose in testing Abraham was to prove, or to confirm, his faith.

- What was a significant moment in your life where your faith was tested? What are 1-2 lessons you learned about God and about yourself during the time of testing?
- Just like how a student can take additional tutoring sessions to improve on a subject before a test, or an athlete adopts a new workout routine to prepare for a marathon, or a carpenter stock up on supplies in a toolbox for future projects, Christians can also prepare "spiritual tools and muscles" for times of testing.

Take a moment to reflect what spiritual disciplines have helped you pass the test in the past. Examples can include memorizing more Scripture, having an accountability partner or a mentor, or regularly attending prayer services. Share with the group.

2. God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. To Abraham, Isaac represented the EMBODIMENT of everything Abraham and Sarah believed about God. All their hopes and dreams rested on that boy. Pastor Bryan explained that a burnt offering was an expression of total surrender to God. The worshipper takes something of value (an animal, grain) and place it on the altar where it would be totally consumed by fire and offered entirely to God.
  - Pause for a moment and consider what could be an "Isaac" in your life. Examples can include career, possessions, wealth, dreams of marriage or children or legacy, retirement, etc.
  - Consider what might it sound like for God to ask us to "prove" our faith in Him by giving something up as a burnt offering.
    - o Are you prepared to trust God with your greatest treasures, with your hopes and dreams? Are you prepared to take your career, your finance, your relationships, your retirement, your church, and put them on the altar, making them available to God and His purposes?
3. Faith is simply *confidence* in God. When Isaac asks his father where the offering for the sacrifice is, Abraham responds, *"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."* Since Abraham first said "yes" to God, his family has faced many hardships and challenges. God has made a way through each of them and Abraham has learned that he can trust God in any situation.

- When was the last time you or someone you know had to completely trust God for provision?
  - What are some obstacles or factors that make it challenging to have complete confidence in God.
  - Read Hebrews 11:17 together. Take a moment to pray for someone you know who needs provision. Pray that this person would have faith like Abraham where they have such confidence and trust in God with their lives.
4. Today baptisms were performed at several of our campuses. Now might be a good time to consider where you are on your journey of faith and whether you are ready to make a public declaration to follow Jesus. If this is something you are thinking about, talk to your group about why you think you are ready and what next steps can you take.
  5. While this story from Genesis is about God testing Abraham's faith, this was a foreshadowing of God's ultimate vision and purpose – Jesus Christ being offered as the Lamb of God so that all can be restored into relationship with God and into partnership in His grand vision for all of creation.

As we conclude the sermon series on Beginnings, pastor Bryan asserts that all these beginnings, all the Old Testament, points to and finds its fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- End your small group time with a time of prayer, lifting thanksgiving and praise to Jesus Christ for what He has done. Celebrate the good news found in Jesus!

#### ***Take Home Message:***

The story of Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac foreshadows Jesus' death on the cross in the New Testament. When Isaac asks, *"Father, where is the lamb for the offering?"* **Jesus Christ the Son of God, was and is the Lamb**, who by his death and resurrection saved us from sin and its consequences, so that we could be restored to relationship with God, and to partnership in His grand vision for all creation.

The life of faith begins when **we decide to trust God with every aspect of our lives** – the sins and failures and hurts of our past; our present challenges and opportunities, and our hopes and dreams and fears for the future. Our whole lives, offered up to God, placed in His hands, for our good, and for the good of the world.

#### ***Let's Pray***

### III. **Prayer for Senior Pastor Search**

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

#### **Prayers for Preparation of the heart**

- ☐ Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- ☐ Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

#### **Prayers for the Purposes of God**

- ☐ Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

#### **Prayers for the People of Grace**

- ☐ Pray that Grace Chapel will seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

#### **Prayers for the Person God's calling**

- ☐ Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- ☐ Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

#### **Prayers for Discernment**

- ☐ Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- ☐ Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- ☐ Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

## IV. The Journey



*We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?*

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- ☐ The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- ☐ The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- ☐ The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

### Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

## V. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

### **Teaching Points:**

- ☐ Gospel means the good news of new and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ
- ☐ Judaism, Christianity and Islam all look to Abraham offering up his son as the supreme expression of faith
- ☐ A burnt offering was an expression of total surrender to God
- ☐ Faith is simply confidence in God
- ☐ *Jehovah Jireh* – The Lord will provide
- ☐ The story of Abraham offering up his one and only son as a sacrifice is not about whether Abraham loved God more than Isaac, but about whether Abraham *trusted* God. It wasn't a test of love, it was a test of faith
- ☐ God is in the business of partnership; wanting us to do life with Him in a way that's good for us and good for the world. When we place our careers and finances and relationships in His hands, He can do something with them; something that blesses us and the world around us. The same is true of our fears, failures and disappointments. If we offer them up to Him, He will see to it that something good will come out of them, and that we will return with thanksgiving in our hearts, feeling closer to God and each other than we ever imagined.