

BENEFIT OF TRIALS

Wednesday, March 4

Reading: Genesis 22:1-19

Genesis 22:11 *But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven...12 "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."*

There are those who claim that a true Christian should never have any problems, sickness, or financial struggles. That if they have enough faith, they can be healthy, wealthy, and trouble-free. These people have never read their Bibles!

Why does God allow trials and temptation in our lives? The story of Abraham and Isaac illustrates some of the benefits of tests in our lives. Abraham's life had been one of faith. He believed God when he was told he would be the father of a great nation even though he and his wife were childless! He believed when God said he would have a son when he was 100 years old and Sarah was 90! Sure, he had some lapses of faith (remember Hagar and Ishmael?), but the staple of his life was faithfulness. He is twice called a friend of God (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). But when the Lord commanded him to sacrifice his only son, Abraham faced the biggest test of his life. Would he pass the test and do what God commanded or would he fail and fall into disobedience?

Abraham passed the test! And in so doing, he learned some important things that we need to learn as well.

1. The test REVEALED What Was in his Heart: Abraham realized that God was first in his life because, even though he did not understand why, he was still willing to obey God and sacrifice his only son. The trials in our lives reveal where we are strong and in what areas we need to improve our faith.
2. The Test REFOCUSED Him on What Was Important: Abraham and Isaac worshipped God and named the place "The LORD will provide" (*yéhvah yir 'eh* = Jehovah Jireh). Then God refocused them on His covenant promises. When we pass through trials, we too can learn to refocus our lives on the things of God and His will for our lives.
3. The Test REINFORCED His Faith: Abraham had lived by faith. This supreme act of obedience reinforced His relationship with God. When we endure through trials and resist temptation, it helps us build "spiritual muscles." It also grows our relationship and trust in the Lord and gives us a stronger witness to the world.
4. The Test Pointed to His Only RELIABLE Source of Strength: Abraham learned that God could be trusted – that God will provide. The trials of life point us to the only One on whom we can depend – our only Source of strength.

Back when I was in school, nobody liked test day. But without the pressure of the coming test, we would not have learned and studied as much. We may never have known just how much we learned and how much more there was to know. Tests and trials can be used by God to help us grow if we allow Him to lead. But that doesn't mean we want to have trials every day! Praying "Lead us not into temptation" is a plea for God to direct us away from situations we can't handle, but also a reminder that God will help us through any trial if we look to His leadership. How have you experienced growth in your life in times of testing or trials? How can you share that experience to help others?