

Day Six

Scripture:

Genesis 22:1-14 (alternative Genesis 22:1-2, 11-13)

Reflection:

Many of life's greatest challenges to our lives involve choices. Do we take the risk involved in a new job offer? Do we show up for team tryouts? Do we say yes when the new boy in class asks us if we want to go to a movie?

Sometimes, these choices might mean we would have to give up things we love. A high school senior gets a scholarship to a great college, but it is so far away that coming back home to visit is going to be possible only at Christmas. A family's much-loved dog is old and sick, and they wonder if it is time to have to much-loved pet euthanized (put to sleep)? Sometimes, in the hardest choices of all, we have to choose between two things we love.

Abraham is given precisely this kind of choice. He has been put on the spot. Now, he has to choose between doing something God has commanded and the life of his deeply loved son, Isaac. And, to make it even worse, God's command is not explained. It does not make much sense. Unfortunately, he is not given any other options. Obey God and lose your son. Keep your son, but only by not obeying God. And the choice is literally in Abraham's hands.

Of course, most of us already know the rest of the story. But, imagine if we did not. Put yourself in Abraham's place for a

moment. He does not know how the story will end. He is left with a choice: God or Isaac, but not both. Would you give up your own son just because God told you to do that?

Do you see the great irony of the story? If he had chosen Isaac, he would have disobeyed God. He would have forfeited the covenant. And, at some future time, Isaac will still eventually die from an accident or just from old age. So, deciding to hang on Isaac is not even possible in the long run. Try as we might, time will not let us hold on to the people and things around us forever. But, to choose God instead of Isaac is to end up with both God and Isaac. The covenant promises will be kept. God will provide (22:14). That's just the way God is with His promises. We can choose what, in the long run, we cannot keep, or we can choose what, for all eternity, we will never lose.

The story of Christmas is about God choosing us, even though it will cost him the life of His only begotten Son on the cross. In Genesis 22, a man picks obeying God over the life of his beloved son. In the New Testament, God chooses to save us through the death of his beloved son.

Family:

Once upon a time, there was a penniless little girl who went out to find food for her family. She had saved up enough money to buy a loaf of bread. But, that was all. Everyone was so hungry they would all eat the loaf of bread in just one meal. Then, she had no more money, so they would have no more food at all. She was very worried and very sad.

She went to a local store and told the kindly old store owner she needed to buy a loaf of bread. The store owner listened but told her she needed to spend her money to buy a large

black piece of coal. But, she wants the food so her family could eat. The old man told she he thought she needed to buy the lump of coal. She was just about to demand her loaf of bread when she thought about what she knew about the store owner. She knew he was a good man. She knew he was supposed to be stronger than anyone else in the village. And, she knew he cared about her and her family. But, she also knew her family was starving and that nobody could eat a piece of coal.

After she thought and thought, she finally decided to trust the old man.

“All right, I’ll buy the piece of coal. But, just because you said so,” she said.

“That is very wise,” said the old man with a smile. Then, he picked up the coal and reached out toward her. Just before she took it, he wrapped his two big hands around the piece of coal and stopped. She could see he was squeezing the coal as hard as he could. Soon, she could see the coal getting smaller. It also began to glow with heat. As she watched the lump got smaller and hotter until she could not see anything but his two great big hands.

Finally, he stopped squeezing and opened his hands. And there, right there in his hand, where the big black piece of coal had been, was a bright shining perfect diamond. The biggest one she had ever seen.

“Now,” the old man said, “Because you trusted me enough to do what I told you to do, even when it did not make any sense to you, you have just bought the biggest and most valuable diamond in the world. Take it up the street and the jeweler there will buy it from you for more money than you

and your family will ever need. No one in your family will ever be hungry again.”

As the old man handed her the diamond, the little girl suddenly saw his hands. As her eyes filled with tears, she said, “Oh no. Look. You’ve hurt your hands. Right there in the middle of each one. There are two big hurt places.”

The old man just smiled and handed the little girl the huge diamond.

When Abraham chose to do what God asked, even when it did not make any sense, God rewarded Abraham by providing a ram so that Isaac would not have to die. More than that, God would pass on the covenant to Isaac and his children and their children all the way down to Mary and Joseph.

Prayer:

Pray about trusting God enough to make the right choices, especially when those decisions are difficult. Pray about having enough faith that you do not demand to understand why God asks something. There will be times when you will not understand. Ask God to help you trust Him enough to put obedience to Him above even those people or things you love the most.