

## When God Asks You to Give Back His Gift | Genesis 22:1-18 Sermon Discussion Participant Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** Discuss how walking through seasons of testing might help us grow in our love for God and deepen our faith.

**Sermon Refresher:** In Genesis 22:1-18, we read about the testing of Abraham. In this story, we are reminded that God loves us because he gives us good things and because he sometimes allows difficult times of testing in our lives in order to deepen our faith. The events in this story are both significant in God's big story of redemption and they also speak directly to our own personal experience.

**Icebreaker:** What was the hardest test you've ever taken either for school or for work? What did you do to prepare? What was the test like and how did it go?

**Transition:** While most of us don't enjoy taking tests, the fact remains that tests can serve a helpful purpose in our lives. Times of testing show us what we really know and what we are truly like; they reveal strengths, weaknesses, gaps in our knowledge as well as gaps in our faith. Scripture shows us again and again that God uses times of testing in our lives to increase our faith and deepen our love for him.

### **Discussion:**

1. The testing of Abraham took place many years after the birth of Isaac. Looking back on what we've learned about the life of Abraham so far (feel free to get your Bibles out and thumb through Genesis 12-21), what has Abraham experienced and learned about God that might have prepared him for this test?

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

2. Have someone in the group read Genesis 22:1-18. Make a note of all of Abraham's responses to God throughout the passage. What do we learn about Abraham's character and relationship with God from his responses to this particular test?
  
3. In Genesis 22:4, we see that it took Abraham and Isaac three days to arrive at Moriah. Using your imagination and placing yourself in Abraham's shoes, list off five or more thoughts or feelings *you* might have had on the journey to Moriah.
  
4. All of us have gone through difficult things in our lives that have tested our faith. What are some of the doubts or lies about God that we have been tempted to believe? Knowing those doubts don't disappear overnight, how have you seen the relationship between faith and doubt play out in your life?
  
5. Seeing ourselves in God's bigger story and remembering that we have a part to play can help us navigate seasons of testing. How can it help you personally during difficult times to remember that you are a part of God's bigger story and have a specific role to play?
  
6. What have the last six weeks been like for you? Maybe there have been steps of faith you've taken, or you've been surprised by areas of strength and God enabling you to trust in Him during this time. Or maybe God has also been revealing areas of weakness or gaps in your knowledge or faith. In what ways have you felt encouraged by God's work in you? In what ways have you felt disheartened by your own inadequacies?

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

7. Read through Matthew's account of the testing of Jesus in the wilderness in chapter 4:1-11. What stands out to you as you read Jesus' response? What does it mean to you to know that because your identity is "in Christ", his response to testing is "yours" in Christ?
8. What is one thing you want to do this week that might help you walk closer to God and trust him during this season of testing that we are all going through.

## **Prayer Time:**

Spend some time praising and thanking God for the ways he has enabled responses and of faith over the last six weeks. Also, spend time receiving God's grace for responses that were out of fear and anxiety.