

**Hebrews 11:17-22**  
**July 17, 2016**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: When you think about your faith journey with the Lord, what do you believe has been God's biggest "ask" of you that required boatloads of faith on your part? [Let people reflect/answer]

Q: Let's look at this question from a different vantage point. What is the biggest "ask" you have made of God that demonstrated your deep faith in God that He would deliver on it? [Share move to Austin to take care of parents]

For me, it seems easier to exercise faith by making bold requests before the Lord because they are on *my terms*. It's also based on my belief in God's sovereignty, the infallibility of God's Word, e.g. "*nothing is impossible for God.*" If He said, I believe it! So I have no problems putting before God what I call "big, hairy, audacious" prayer requests.

**Transition:** On the other hand, it is my experience that exercising faith is hard when it is God asking me to do something way outside of my comfort zone. In fact, we are getting ready to read that what God asks of His children is labeled as "tests." I want you dial into that truth, and especially look for how Abraham dealt with it. So far, the inductees of the Hall of Faith that we have studied so far have shown us that if we obey God, He is faithful to deliver on His promises to us. So let's continue our study of the inductees of the Hall of Faith by picking up where we left off. **All of us can improve living by faith by following the EXAMPLES of those whom God commended.** Let's begin.

**BOOK (NIV 1984): [Read Heb 11:17-22]**

V.17:

- By faith Abraham, when **God tested** him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son,

V.18:

- even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

V.19:

- **Abraham reasoned** that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

V.20:

- By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

V.21:

- By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and **worshiped** as he leaned on the top of his staff.

V.22:

- By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: When God “tested” Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, what did Abraham do? [He *reasoned* that God could raise Isaac from the dead!]

Q: Why is the word “reasoned” significant? [Faith can’t be based on “feelings”]

X-REF: Gen 22:1-14

Q: What was God looking for when He tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac? [God wanted to know that Abraham feared Him and wasn’t withholding anything back from Him, especially His one and only son.]

Share *Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren (pg 42-44): Though many of us in this room understand that God will test us from time to time, Rick Warren believes testing is an integral part of our journey with God. He calls it a life metaphor. [Read from the book]

**Observation:** Abraham believed and obeyed God when he did not know WHEN God would fulfill His promises (Heb. 11:13–16). None of the patriarchs saw the complete fulfillment of God’s promises, but they saw from “afar off” what God was doing. Abraham and his descendants exercised faith and lived in tents, trusting that a heavenly city awaited them. **God always fulfills His promises to His believing people, either immediately or ultimately.**

Q: Has anyone ever experienced believing and obeying God without knowing WHEN God’s will would be fulfilled, but it finally happened? [See if there are any testimonies – share timing of moving to Austin to take care of parents]

**Observation:** Abraham obeyed God by faith when he did not know WHY God worked the way He did. (Heb. 11:17–19). Why would God want Abraham to sacrifice his son when it was the Lord who gave him that son? All of a future nation’s promises were wrapped up in Isaac. The tests of faith become more difficult as we walk with God, yet the rewards are more wonderful!

**Conclusion:** In the end, our decision to exercise faith is based on *reason, not feelings*. We understand that God will test us, but He is faithful to us when we obey Him and don’t withhold any area of our lives back from Him. We use *reason* because God is the object of our faith. We cognitively BELIEVE in His goodness, His power and might, His grace and mercy, His compassion, etc. We KNOW (not feel) He is worthy of our complete faith and trust in Him.

[Read Heb 11:23-29]

### **LOOK:**

Q: What is your takeaway today that helps you increase your living by faith?

### **Close in Prayer**

**Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 319). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

Finally, Abraham obeyed God by faith when *he did not know why God was so working* (Heb. 11:17–19). Why would God want Abraham to sacrifice his son when it was the Lord who gave him that son? All of a future nation's promises were wrapped up in Isaac. The tests of faith become more difficult as we walk with God, yet the rewards are more wonderful! And we must not ignore the obedient faith of Isaac.

In Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, we have four generations of faith. These men sometimes failed, but basically they were men of faith. They were not perfect, but they were devoted to God and trusted His Word. Isaac passed the promises and the blessings along to Jacob (Gen. 27), and Jacob shared them with his twelve sons (Gen. 48–49). Jacob was a pilgrim, for even as he was dying he leaned on his pilgrim staff.

The faith of Joseph was certainly remarkable. After the way his family treated him, you would think he would have abandoned his faith; but instead, it grew stronger. Even the ungodly influence of Egypt did not weaken his trust in God. Joseph did not use his family, his job, or his circumstances as an excuse for unbelief. *Joseph knew what he believed*—that God would one day deliver his people from Egypt (Gen. 50:24–26). *Joseph also knew where he belonged*—in Canaan, not in Egypt; so he made them promise to carry his remains out of Egypt at the Exodus. They did! (see Ex. 13:19 and Josh. 24:32)

We have to admire the faith of the patriarchs. They did not have a complete Bible, and yet their faith was strong. They handed God's promises down from one generation to another. In spite of their failures and testings, these men and women believed God and He bore witness to their faith. How much more faith you and I should have!

**Pentecost, J. D. (1985). *Daniel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 808). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

3. THE VARIEGATED EXPERIENCES OF FAITH (11:17–40)

A new movement, the author's exposition of the life of faith, begins here. In a multiplicity of varied experiences faith remains the constant factor by which these experiences are met and understood. Faith constitutes a Christian's true "world view" (cf. v. 3).

11:17–19. The theme of testing emerges here as the writer returned to **Abraham**. The readers can learn from that supreme test in which the patriarch was called on **to sacrifice his ... son**. Though this seemed to contradict the divine promise, Abraham was able to rise above the trial and trust in the resurrecting power of God. So also Christian readers must sometimes look beyond the experiences of life, in which God's promises do not seem to be fulfilled, and realize that their resurrections will bring those promises to fruition.

11:20–22. The patriarchs mentioned here likewise looked to the future in **faith**. **Isaac**, trusting God to fulfill His promises to Abraham and his descendants, pronounced blessings on his own two sons **Jacob and Esau** regarding **their future**. So did **Jacob** in regard to **Joseph's sons**, which was for him an act of faith in his old age. The readers too were to maintain their worship right to the end of life, persevering in faith in the future that God had foretold. **Joseph** too, nearing death, expressed confidence that God would in the future deliver **the Israelites from**

**Egypt.** In similar fashion all believers should, in genuine faith, have confidence in the future of God's people.

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1835). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.**

**11:17** Some see a contradiction in this verse because they argue it says that Abraham had only one son, Isaac, when it is known from other passages (Gn 16:15; Gl 4:22) that he also had a son named Ishmael. This verse can be explained by remembering that Isaac was the promised son on whom the fulfillment of God's pledge of numerous descendants to Abraham depended (Gn 15:1–6; 22:15–18). Thus, in this sense, Ishmael did not count. This conclusion is further borne out by Heb 11:18: "In Isaac your seed will be called" (see Gn 21:12).

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