

Unconditional Trust

ABRAHAM FACED HIS ULTIMATE CHALLENGE OF OBEDIENCE ON MOUNT MORIAH. HE TRUSTED GOD AND SURRENDERED. UNAWARE OF WHAT THE OUTCOME WOULD BE.

As the sun rose in the east, elusive early morning shadows played about the rugged crown of Mount Moriah. It was now just a day's journey away.

Abraham searched its dim outline for understanding as sand shifted beneath his feet. The words of Jehovah echoed again and again through his mind. They caused the old man's heart to pound.

"Abraham!" God had called.

"Here I am," he replied, his heart rising with anticipation at the sound of the Lord's voice.

"Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah," God began.

Ah, what mighty revelation will there be this time? Abraham thought excitedly.

God continued, "Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

Abraham gasped for air, barely able to breathe. He spent the night on his face before God.

The next morning Abraham cut wood for the fire and strapped it, along with provisions for the trip, to the back of his donkey. By sunrise Abraham, Isaac and two servants were on their way.

By nightfall they had reached the mountain. "Stay here with the donkey while the boy I and go over there," he said to his

servants, motioning toward the mount aim in the distance. "We will worship, and then we will come back to you."

The men strapped the wood for the sacrifice onto Isaac's back. He looked to his father for further directions. Abraham nodded to Isaac to continue on with him.

THEIR SPIRITUAL HISTORY There was a bond between this father and son that surpassed words and even actions. Abraham had taught Isaac animal husbandry and the management of vast material resources; but even more importantly, he had taught him to listen for the voice of God and to obey Him utterly.

Long ago Abraham had told the boy of his own encounters with God and of God's promises concerning the great nation that would come through him. Isaac had believed that the sovereign God was good and that He would fulfill His promises. He had the visible presence of Abraham to reflect God's goodness and a profound sense that all would be well if he stayed in Jehovah's hands and walked in obedience to his beloved father.

Abraham had once been a fearful man who, when in danger, took the path of least resistance. But now, issues of self-preservation and control must be settled.

"Father?" Isaac broke through Abraham's reverie.

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

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

"God will provide, Isaac. God will provide" (see Gen. 22:1-19).

ABRAHAM COMES OF AGE How do we come to the place where our trust is so complete that we find no contradiction in a God who tells us He loves us and then instructs us to give up all that we hold most dear?

How could Abraham have bound his precious son of promise to the altar stones? How could a gentle, loving father have raised the blade above his head and prepared to plunge it into the heart of his son?

What changed Abraham from a coward who had always questioned God's provisions to a giant of the faith? What transpired in his heart that caused him to trust God beyond reason?

Perhaps Abraham was overcome by the revelation of his own sin in doubting God so often in the past. Or maybe it was the deep conviction that God's plan was greater and more far-reaching than his mind could ever measure.

Did Abraham have an inkling of Mount Moriah's role in the years to come? Could he have known that David would dream of a place of surrender there—the temple that his son Solomon would build?

Did God whisper to Abraham that someday His own Son would be on trial on this mountain? Had Abraham felt the heavenly Father's pain over His own Son's impending death and subsequently found the grace to be obedient?

Abraham came of age spiritually that day on Mount Moriah. He left behind all that had been a comfort to him and surrendered the identity that could have been established through his son. He refused to yield even to his own heart.

Abraham trusted God. In the moment he raised the knife and looked to heaven, he died a thousand deaths—not just his own but those of all Isaac's descendants.

Abraham went to the cross before it was ever invented, and his selfishness was at last crucified. He became nothing; God was all that mattered.

THE PAIN OF YIELDING We know Abraham today as a great man of faith. God counted it as righteousness and provided a

substitute—a ram caught in the thicket near the altar.

God knew that Abraham would be obedient. He also knew that the ram would be provided at the last moment and that Isaac would not die.

But neither father nor son knew for sure that they would be spared the prescribed agony. They had no outward sign that God would change His mind.

Nevertheless, it was necessary for them to surrender and make the journey to the cross. The fact that God could raise the dead (see Heb. 11:19) made it no less a death. The resulting pain was real for this father and son.

For us, too, the pain of total surrender is real. Death to life as we want to fashion it must occur. Independence and self-sufficiency, controlling tactics and clinging to outcomes must die.

Whether in relationships, ministry dreams, personal identity, expectations for family members, physical strength or money—all the good and bad of each—we must experience death to find freedom and intimacy with God.

But how do we live with the prospect of dreams and gifts being abandoned forever, especially those that will obviously minister to others? Who are we without them?

AMY'S DREAM Music had been Amy's life. From the time she was big enough to reach the keyboard, her fingers had sought to connect new melodies awaiting in the ivory keys with lyrics from her heart.

As a teen-ager, Amy and two friends formed a trio that traveled in their own bus and cut gospel records. Ministering in song was her greatest joy, and she anticipated a career in music.

Then came marriage and three children. The church piano became

her ministry platform. While her days and nights were spent in loving and nurturing her family, the dream of performing publicly remained bound in the back of her life.

The songs still came, the words consigned to a notebook and the melodies stowed away in her memory. They were good songs that encouraged others to more fully know the love of God.

As she folded laundry and cleaned the house, Amy wrestled with God for an answer. "When will the world hear these songs? When I'm old and gray and barely able to carry a tune?

"I want to sing these songs for Your glory! They stand for who You and I are together. Do You want them to rot away in oblivion?" she said with disgust and frustration. Only silence greeted her grumbling, until one day He answered.

"Amy, do you love Me?" the Lord asked her gently. In shock she stopped stirring the stew and laid down the ladle.

"Yes, Lord. Just listen to my songs. They say so. They're my offering to You," came Amy's answer straight from her heart.

He pressed on. "Which do you love more, Child, Me or the music?" Before she could answer, He asked another question. "Amy, do you think that You and I would be any closer if you could perform your music for others? Does our relationship need the songs in your notebook?"

"But my music is me, Lord. How can I come to You without it?" she asked, bewildered.

"No, your music is a gift, a gift from Me to you, not from you to Me," He answered her. "First there was you. And it is you I have always loved and you for whom I died. It is you I long to be with and bless. The songs are not so important, are they?"

Amy had no answer. Tears filled her eyes. In that moment of revelation she saw what she hadn't seen for 46 years. She did perhaps love her music more than she loved God. The gift had

obscured the Giver.

TEST OF LOVE He spoke to her spirit again. "What will you do if I never make a way for you to record your songs? What if you die with them still tucked away in your memory and your little notebook? Will you have loved Me any less, or I, you?"

"But Lord," Amy insisted through her tears, "I'm nothing without these songs. I'm just Amy—a nobody. My music is all I have to leave behind."

"When your children think lovingly of you, is it because of some song you wrote? And your husband, does he ask for your music or your heart when you're alone in the candlelight?"

"Let the dreams go, Amy, let them go. Give them to Me. If I never grace your heart with another song, My passion for you will not lessen.

"Don't you know that if your voice were silenced and no pianos remained on earth for you to play, I'd still sing love songs to you? You have thought that the music is born out of your love for Me. On the contrary, Amy, the music has been born out of My love for you! Will you accept My love songs and simply let them be between you and Me?"

Amy fell to her knees. The cross pierced her heart, letting all the insecurities and striving flow out and onto her Lord.

Sweet silence enveloped her as she emptied herself at His feet. She died to years of hopes and dreams.

Then the sweetest melody she had ever heard poured into her soul! But she didn't run to write it down. There on her knees, she simply loved the Giver of the song.

As He had Abraham, God led Amy to a place of ultimate surrender and complete trust. So it is with us. As we seek the heart of God, we must each travel to our own Mount Moriah. We will love Him more dearly at the journey's end whether there

is a ram caught in the thicket or not.

Read a companion devotional.

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