

# CALLED TO BE FAITHFUL

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How do you know when God is calling for you?

Will you hear a voice? See a confluence of signs? Have a hunch? Dream a dream?

What does a “call of God” look like? How could you distinguish a “call of God” from a simple career change, or a good investment, or a fortunate experience?

What would you consider a test of your faith? Something that requires extraordinary courage? Or maybe just having to wait!

Waiting *for* the Lord is simply a matter of patiently adjusting my schedule to His (waiting for His perfect time to act).

Waiting *on* the Lord is something else—it is the work of a waiter or waitress: watching, listening, anticipating a call to service, and responding as needed.

Today, we’re going to learn about a man who received a call from God. His faith was tested in an extraordinary way. I expect that there will be some elements of his test that will shock you—things you did not expect God would ask. Yet, in the final outcome, we will be amazed at how God, also, kept faith with him.

The man I’m referring to is Abraham—forefather of the nation of Israel, forefather of all who believe in God through Jesus Christ, whose story is told in the ancient book of Genesis.

Abraham was only a young man (known then as Abram) when God first called for him. God called him to uproot himself from family and culture and take a journey to another land that he knew nothing about. Abraham chose to trust God and follow His lead. God led him from the heart of the Middle East (modern-day Iraq) to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea (modern-day Israel).

There, God began to bless Abraham. Meeting with him and speaking to him on several occasions, God began to paint the picture of Abraham’s future abundance. When Abraham was already well-advanced in years, God promised him a son, who would carry on the blessing and purpose—even though Abraham’s wife, Sarah, was also advanced in years and had been unable to conceive a child.

God was patient with Abraham as he struggled to understand God’s ways and completely rely on God to do what He had promised. And God proved Himself repeatedly, even to Abraham’s faltering faith.

Over the course of years, God built up Abraham’s wealth and ultimately gave him and Sarah the son He had promised, whom Abraham named Isaac. Abraham loved Isaac, not only because he was his son, but especially because Isaac represented God’s faithfulness and power and carried a wonderful promise of blessing appointed by God.

Then, God tested Abraham. The surprising story is found in Genesis 22.

God tested Abraham's faith and obedience.

*Genesis 22:1 Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."*

God called, Abraham responded. He called Abraham to worship. Abraham had a history of worship (altars, sacrifices, covenants). But this time, God required Isaac as the sacrifice.

*Genesis 22:2 "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."*

It may have been a sleepless night for old father Abraham, but the "next morning" he obeyed. Think of what God was asking...and the very next morning, Abraham obeyed! He saddled his donkey, took two servants to chop wood, and they set out for the mountain of the Lord.

*Genesis 22:3 The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about.*

On the third day, he saw their destination in the distance. Abraham told his servants to wait until he and his son returned.

*Genesis 22:4 On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.*  
<sup>5</sup> *"Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."*

Isaac shouldered the wood—the wood that would become his own funeral pyre. Abraham carried the knife and the fire for worship.

As they continued toward the mountain, Isaac had a question.

*Genesis 22:7 Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"*  
*"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.*  
*"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"*

"God will provide a lamb," replied his father. The King James Version renders it: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:8) "Provide Himself." That He would!

*Genesis 22:9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.*

<sup>10</sup> *And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.* <sup>11</sup> *At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"*

*"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"*

<sup>12</sup> *"Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."*

<sup>13</sup> *Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son.*

He named the place "The Lord Will Provide." It became a proverb (an adage, a common saying): "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." In other words, at the ultimate point of self-sacrifice your

provision will come. Too few people get to the “mountain of the Lord” to realize the provision. They flirt with the mountain, but remain in the valleys.

And as if that miracle of provision wasn’t enough, then God declared a great blessing for Abraham and his offspring.

*Genesis 22:15* Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. <sup>16</sup> “This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that <sup>17</sup> I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. <sup>18</sup> And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.”

Abraham and his son returned home together.

What lessons of spiritual principle can we take away from this story?

1. God’s call involves a direction, not a specified destination.

He leads us by step-by-step. He doesn’t offer a roadmap; instead, He provides a Guide to make the journey with us.

2. When God asks the impossible, He is testing our faith and obedience.

Faith without obedience cannot pass the test. Obedience without faith cannot pass the test. With any measure of faith and obedience, you cannot fail! God doesn’t give the test to fail you, but to grow you. Only by stretching does faith increase. Only by testing does obedience become a settled habit.

3. A test of faith usually involves an act of worship.

Will you act in a way that honors God? That is worship.

Will you offer what God asks for? That is worship.

Will you uphold your covenant (pledge, promise)? That, too, is worship.

True worship is not a religious ritual but a lifestyle of faith working through love. Is it yours?

4. Your response of faith should acknowledge God’s power and promise to provide.

*Hebrews 11:17* It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God’s promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, <sup>18</sup> even though God had told him, “Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted.” <sup>19</sup> Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

Paul identifies Abraham’s God as Him “who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did.” He will do the same for you, too.

5. Faith and obedience result in even greater blessing...and increased fellowship with God.

And that is God's intent. His purpose is to clear away all that hinders His blessing from overtaking your life; to draw you nearer to Himself and fill you to overflowing.

God calls you, too, to the Mountain of the Lord—again and again—a place of personal sacrifice of all that has stolen your heart from Him. The journey will stretch and grow your trust in Him, so that He can bless you even more.

He simply calls you to be faithful. If you will be faithful to Him, He will be extraordinary for you!