

The Road to Friendship

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan's sermon explores Abraham's profound faith and obedience as the foundation for a deep friendship with God.

Scripture: Genesis 22:1

Topics: "Trust in God", "Obedience"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the profound journey of trust and obedience in Abraham's relationship with God, illustrating how Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac demonstrated his unwavering faith in God's character and promises. The sermon reflects on the emotional turmoil Abraham must have faced, yet he chose to obey God, believing that even in death, God could fulfill His promises. Yohannan draws parallels between Abraham's obedience and the call to trust and obey God in our own lives, highlighting that true friendship with God is rooted in our willingness to follow His commands. The message encourages believers to understand that the road to friendship with God is paved with trust and obedience, leading to blessings beyond measure.

Transcript

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him

from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said.

"Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Genesis 22:1-12, 15-18, NIV).

There's a wonderful hymn that declares, "But we never can prove the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay; for the favor He shows, and the joy He bestows, are for them who will trust and obey. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."¹ How true this is. When God called Abraham, He absolutely promised that He would bless him and make him a blessing. But none of this happened overnight. The journey was long, and many tests came along, as well as many failures.

And in the ultimate test, Abraham's absolute confidence was found in the character of God as he laid the son who would fulfill God's promise on the altar. Imagine the scene the night before. Every time I read this passage about Abraham, I cannot help but think about my two children. I wonder if Abraham could sleep that night. I wouldn't have slept. Maybe he tried to sleep, but memories from the previous years filled his mind--like the moment he first heard God tell him and Sarah that they would have a son and they both chuckled as they thought about the silliness of a promise like that in their old age.

And then that day when Sarah was indeed pregnant and no one could believe it. Or Isaac learning to walk and the first time he said "daddy." What memories must have filled his mind? Perhaps Abraham spent that night in Isaac's room, watching his son as he slept, trying to freeze that moment in his mind forever. After looking at his son dozens of times, he wiped the tears and tried to go to sleep once more. Imagine how difficult it must have been for Abraham to even think about sacrificing his own son and the promise that God had given him.

I am sure he would have gladly died in Isaac's place if he could. But Romans 4:17 gives us a glimpse of how Abraham was able to obey the Lord, even in such a difficult request. It says that Abraham believed God, "who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did." The road to friendship was the road of trust. The dictionary defines trust as the "firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability and justice of another person or thing."² Abraham trusted in the character of the God who called him and took care of him from the moment he first left Ur.

He trusted that God was able to fulfill the promise He had given him even if his son was dead. It was only Abraham's absolute trust and confidence in the sovereignty and nature of God that caused him to follow at all costs. I am sure that if God had asked Abraham to sacrifice 10,000 sheep or 5,000 bulls, he would have surely done it. That type of sacrifice would have been easy and mean very little to Abraham. It would have been a sacrifice that cost him nothing. David echoed Abraham's attitude concerning this in 2 Samuel 24:24 (NIV) saying, "No . . .

I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." Abraham chose to obey God even when it was very costly. As a result, in Genesis 22:16-18, we hear God telling Abraham, 'By Myself I have sworn,' says the LORD, 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son--blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the

heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice' (emphasis added). The road to friendship was the road of obedience. This truth is paralleled in the New Testament as well. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:10, 14-15).

The more we understand the nature and character of our Lord and His absolute love, compassion and mercy, the more we will be able to abandon ourselves at His feet, obeying whatever He calls us to do. Through the life of Abraham, we see how obedience and trust precede friendship and blessing. How was Abraham able to trust and obey the Lord in such a great way? Surely the sacrifices in his life were already great. He gave up his homeland, his riches, everything that was familiar to him--wasn't that enough?

I'm sure a lot of us could talk ourselves out of such a difficult request, especially after already sacrificing so much. But Abraham did not do that. What kept him in obedience and in a tender walk with God was his fear of the Lord. For "by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil" (Proverbs 16:6). Notes: 1 John H. Sammis, "Trust and Obey," 1887. 2 Webster's New World College Dictionary, Third Edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1997).

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