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KNOW GOD

Has Jesus led you into an outrageous situation that was complete foolishness in your mind?

What revelation of God did you receive by your journey of faithfulness through that situation?

Reflect on Jesus's journey of faith in His Father as He cried out "why have you forsaken me" on the cross. How was His experience different—more complete—than Abraham's?

Genesis 22:9-11 – ⁹When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. ¹¹But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

1) **Unexpected...**

Faithfulness as a fruit of the Spirit is the personal dedication to obey God. It is acting out the decision that Jesus is Lord of our life in the fullest sense. It is our Spirit-powered response to a deep conviction that God is both all-loving and all-powerful. It is also maddening, constantly challenging us to act against our reasoning and intellect. We truly become fools to the world as we think, say, and do things others wouldn't dare to dream. Often those things are frightening as God leads us into danger, discomfort, and poverty. Sometimes, those things are the epitome of what we perceive as disreputable. Either way, our rational mind opposes our desire to please Him because it did not expect our all-loving God to deprive us or put us at odds with the essence of His goodness. We think to ourselves, Wait—What?!? at our suddenly unexpected savior.

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◆ **Led by God:** There are plenty of dangerous and uncomfortable situations we cause through ignorance of His will. The unexpected revelation of God discovered by our faithfulness is orchestrated by Him. Abraham was led by God into such a discovery, so he climbed a mountain and “came to the place that God had shown him (Genesis 22:9)... “ Faithfulness in us is our willingness to do whatever He asks without reservation. We do not improve His plan, help Him out, take a short cut, or pick our battles. He is Lord and we respond *your will is our command*.

◆ **Into terror:** So far, so good. We trust Jesus and know He will lead us to green pastures and still waters. Then, one day, He doesn't. He leads us to confront a giant, into the camp of a terrible army, away from our homeland, and into an ambush. Our minds cannot process the seeming change of character of our Lord. Suddenly, we find ourselves doubting His wisdom and power, His love for us. It is in these moments we need the power of the Spirit within to dominate our heart and mind. This is why faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit. Imagine the battle raging inside of Abraham as he “bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood (v9).” He was led by God into terror.

II) **Outrageous...**

Jesus leads us into more than terror. He leads us into the outrageous. Situations that are so predictably dangerous or despicable that to go through with them will change us completely and permanently—if we survive. Just as His Spirit proves our potential in Jesus to be limitless, He proves that there are no lines God will not cross to discover our devotion. Devotion to God Himself, not His Law, His way of life, our reputation, sense of goodness, ideals of morality. He is a jealous God and will lead us past the boundary of outrageous scandal to discover if we will follow Him because we love Him unconditionally.

◆ **Personal act:** Faithfulness is a willful choice to obey. It would be easier if Jesus were like a dentist, doing the uncomfortable thing to us. That's not how we discover who He is in new, deep ways. We must act on the conviction He is who He claims to be, even when the act seems to betray that claim. He wills us to discover the completeness of His faithfulness by freely following Him into terror. He seeks to know if we will take responsibility for our acts of obedience. It is Abraham who was responsible when he “reached out his hand and took the knife (v10)... “ Whatever happens, Abraham is not a victim in this personal act. The faithful justify their deeds solely on the fact they are God's will.

◆ **The void:** Since the beginning, God has been promising blessed life if we follow His ways. This leads many astray who are deceived into believing that life according to the Law is the virtuous pursuit. God tests whether we identify ourselves as faithful followers of Jesus or self-righteous people. He commands us to break the social norms that our community identifies as good. At God's command, Abraham “took the knife to kill his son (v10).” He stared into the void of his identity that would go from community leader, loving husband and father to depraved, murderous lunatic who destroyed the precious gift God had long promised. The choice to obey is so outrageously opposed to anyone's idea of God's character that he would never be believed.

III) **Overwhelming...**

The point of no return is the threshold over which there is no turning back. The moment in which our minds are determined, and we will go through with some plan. Often these are noted in dangerous plans that require steeling our nerves and accepting the consequences as if they have occurred. It is overwhelming when something changes and the end we have determined does not come. We experience this in the flood of emotions that come with relief when accepted disaster is averted, and the tears of joy roll.

◆ **Presence:** Faithfulness leads us past the point of no return while our mind gives into the reality that we will never again be worthy of the name of Jesus. The inner battle is over, yet the flesh attempts to poison the spirit's victory. This is the moment the power of God's Spirit comes upon us to assure us of His presence. As Abraham actuates his commitment to the despicable, “the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham (v11)!’” However wicked or perverse this act feels, God's presence anoints it as holy.

◆ **Intimacy:** Throughout Abraham's life, God led him into foreign territory. Each time, when Abraham arrived, God met with Him. God is with us as we go where He leads. Follow me. In our desperation, our hearts cry out, pleading for Him to rescue us from the danger and disgrace of what He commanded. Faithfulness demands that we rely completely on Him because the circumstances are beyond our understanding. In the fateful moment, He calls to us and in our overwhelmed relief we reply, “Here I am (v11).” Our doubts are annihilated as we learn the only way we can that God's pure will is intimacy with us. As we worship by our lives, nurturing the fruits of the Spirit, faithfulness is the unshakable desire to be with Jesus at any cost. Only through the journey of faith will we know God.