

## SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

### "THE MISSING PIECE OF WHY" HEBREWS 11:17-19

#### **This Week's Core Competency**

**Hope** – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19, 20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

Biblically speaking, what can we hope for? I can truly, 'take-it-to-the-bank' hope for. Oftentimes, we 'hope' a job interview goes well, or we 'hope' to have a fun, safe trip to the coast. Perhaps some once 'hoped' their marriage would be saved. And how many of us have 'hoped' that a loved one would be cured of a terminal illness? While it is perfectly natural to long for and even pray for these things (as the Spirit leads—Eph 6:18), hope is far more than the sum total of one's personal desire. "In casual conversation the word hope conveys a desire...that is uncertain of fulfillment. Doubt is attached as if the hope or wish will probably not come to pass. [But] the word hope is only rarely used in this way in Scripture; most often it conveys the meaning of a confident or certain expectation" (Don Campbell, *The Theological Wordbook*, 169).

But that begs the question, "Of what can we be absolutely certain of and therefore hopeful for?" The answer is surprisingly simple. Biblical 'hope' is a proper response to the declarative promises of God as revealed in his word; promises that can be applied to, yet transcend, our present circumstances. Space will only

permit a few examples, but they are undoubtedly worth affirming! As believers in Jesus Christ, God has promised us eternal life (John 1:12, 3:16, 5:24, etc). So, if a fellow believer is dealing with a serious illness, our hope in the promise of permanent healing in the life to come remains unshakable. Or, we can know for certain of God's promise to faithfully complete a good work in us (Phil 1:6, 2:13, etc). So, in the midst of great personal disappointment, or even through our ongoing struggle with sin, we can maintain a steadfast hope that God not only can but will work together all things for good (Rom 8:28). Additionally, it is easy to develop a sense of hopelessness with all the evil and suffering we see in the world. Yet, God has promised us he is going to do something about it (Nahum 1:2; Romans 12:19—cf. Deut 32:35). So while our hearts may ache over a natural disaster, injustice, human cruelty, etc. (*hopefully* to the point it moves us to action or advocacy!), we can sleep soundly at night knowing that: all evil will be avenged by our holy and just God, that he has promised to remove any/all suffering - physical, mental, etc.—from our presence in eternity (Rev 21:3-5) and that we will spend forever in unbroken fellowship with Jesus Christ (Phil 1:23). We have these and many more wonderful promises from God that we can hang our "hat of hope" upon. And when our faith is grounded on biblical promises, our hope will never return void.

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# day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

## Hebrews 11:17-19

17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. (NIV(c)1984)

### Cf., supplemental passage: Genesis 22:1-18

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

2 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."

3 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. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 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."

6 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, 7 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?"

8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

9 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. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

12 "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."

13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 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, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (NIV(c)1984)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Underline "by faith" in v. 17.
- \* Circle "Abraham" in v. 17.
- \* Highlight "God tested him" in v. 17.
- \* Double underline "offered" in v. 17.
- \* Circle "offered Isaac" in v. 17.
- \* Draw an arrow from "Abraham" to "offered Isaac" in v. 17.

- \* Box the word "promises" in v. 17.
- \* Double Underline "one and only" in v. 17.
- \* Highlight God's words to Abraham in v. 18.
- \* Circle underline "reasoned" in v. 19.
- \* Box "figuratively speaking" in v. 19.
- \* Circle "he did receive" indicating result in v. 19.

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## day 2

## EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Read the biblical account of Abraham's testing (Gen 22). What observations stand out to you?
2. How does today's passage enhance your understanding/appreciation of the original story?
3. What promises had Abraham "received" (v. 17) from God and in relation to Isaac?
4. Verse 17a affirms that Abraham sacrificed Isaac in a real, substantive way (i.e., as a complete action). Yet v. 17b says the sacrifice only got close to happening. Explain how both are correct.
5. Abraham already had a son in Ishmael. How then can this fact be reconciled with God's declaration that Isaac is Abraham's "one and only son" (emphasis mine; v. 17; cf. Gen 22: 2, 12, 16)?
6. Verse 19 says that Abraham calculated how God's request could be reconciled with the prior promises God had made to him. Do you see this as a lack of faith? Explain.
7. "Figuratively speaking," in what sense did Abraham "receive Isaac back from the dead"?
8. "Figuratively speaking" can also carry a connotation of "foreshadowing," or being "typological" of, an event to come. To what "resurrection" might the "reviving" of Isaac been intended to foreshadow?
9. **Reflection 1:** How should this story (Gen 22) and what it says about walking by faith (Heb 11:17-19) impact your/our lives today?
10. **Reflection 2:** Is there something God has been calling you to sacrifice to demonstrate your undivided devotion to him and his calling upon your life?

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Today's passage harkens the author's readers back to one of the most significant events in Jewish history—God's testing of Abraham via his command to sacrifice Isaac at Mount Moriah (Gen 22). Its significance was such that "this dramatic trial of faith was accorded a central place in Jewish tradition. On the basis of Gen 22:9, which states Abraham 'bound' Isaac, this episode was designated as the *Aqedah*, that is to say, the *Binding* (of Isaac). In post-biblical Judaism the *Aqedah* became the subject of an extraordinary homiletical [sermon] development that went far beyond the detail of Gen 22. The incident was regarded as programmatic for the true character of acceptable sacrifice and as efficacious in its redemptive significance. '[In fact], a moving prayer attributed to Abraham in very old Palestinian tradition may be cited as typical of this development: "Now I pray for mercy before you, O Lord God, that when the children of Isaac come to a time of distress, you may remember in their behalf the Binding [*Aqedah*] of Isaac their father, and loose and forgive their sins and deliver them from all distress"' (Pal. Tg. Gen 22:14)" (William Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, WBC 47b, 360). However, such is not the case, as God's satisfaction for our sinfulness against him is found not in a willing sacrifice on our part, or Abraham's, but in the actual sacrifice of his only begotten Son, our Savior, Jesus. Instead, we are to see this as both as a paramount act of faith on the part of Abraham and a powerful testimony of the faithfulness of our promise-keeping God.

Perhaps a review of the events in Genesis 22, in light of our text today, would be helpful. Many years after Isaac was born, God called upon Abraham to sacrifice his son as a "burnt offering" (v. 2). A burnt offering was one performed not to atone for personal sin, but rather as an offering of worship unto the living God. Without delay ("early the next morning"—v. 3) Abraham and Isaac began their journey up to Mount Moriah. When the site of the offering was in view, Abraham and Isaac broke away from their servants to finish the last leg of the journey. Abraham's immense faith is seen in the words spoken to his servants. "We will worship and then we will come back to you" (v. 5). Moments later,

Isaac sensed something was missing. "Father...where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (v. 7). Once again, Abraham responded with incredible faith in his promise-giving/promise-keeping God. "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (v. 8). Their journey complete and with Isaac bound on the altar, Abraham raised his the knife in his hand to complete God's request (vv. 9-10). Immediately, God intervened, stopping Abraham from harming the boy in any way (vv. 11-12). And with Abraham's faith being in perfect accord with God's promise (of many descendents *through* Isaac; including Jesus Christ), God did indeed provide a ram "caught in a thicket" to sacrifice in Isaac's place (v. 13).

Our passage today sheds some additional, substantive light on Abraham's time of testing. Specifically in v. 17, scripture notes the depths of resolve that existed in Abraham's heart and mind - "Abraham...offered Isaac." The perfect tense of this verb communicates that from Abraham's perspective, his sacrifice of Isaac was a foregone conclusion. In his mind, it was as if it had already happened. Also of note are the comments by the Hebrews author in v. 19. "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead." Abram, knowing that God's covenantal promise was to flow through Isaac and his descendents, simply assumed that he would sacrifice Isaac only to have God raise him back from the dead.

So how should one respond to this passage? One author sums it up well. "Ought Abraham to have asked God to justify so preposterous a command? And was it right of God to test his servant with a trial which involved such anguish? No doubt facing such questions was part and parcel of Abraham's testing. Because, however, he enjoyed a proper relationship with God Abraham knew that God is altogether holy and just and loving and that he cannot be untrue to himself; and he realized that it was not for him, a sinful, finite creature, to query the goodness of God. This trial, in fact, so far from shaking Abraham's faith, actually served to establish it, for through the unchangeable character of God's purposes and the impossibility that God should prove false to his promises became more than ever the great

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motivating realities to him as he pressed forward on his pilgrimage. Moreover, this triumph of Abraham's faith gives us 'strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us,'

whatever may be the trials that assail us (6:13-18)" (Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 481-82).

## *The Message of the Passage*

*Resolve to walk by faith, obeying God's commands—  
knowing that he will keep all of his promises.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

- Write about what God wants you to know . . .

- Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

- Write about what God wants you to do . . .

### **“The Missing Piece of Why”**

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 17 **tested** (Lit - "to test, to try, to prove") From the original story, "the particular form of the verb 'tested' makes this phrase a summary of the whole passage and clarifies the meaning of the events. The genuineness of Abraham's obedience to God is tested. While it is not unknown for God to test individuals, testing must be clearly distinguished from tempting. God does not tempt anyone to do evil (see James 1:13); he does, however, test the commitment of people (e.g., Ex. 15:25; 16:4)" (tn to Gen 22:1, *ESV Study Bible*). Among those listed in Hebrews 11 "Faith Hall of Fame," Abraham is the only one mentioned to have been "tested."

v. 17 **offered** This verb is in the perfect active tense. "In v. 17a the sacrifice is considered from the perspective of Abraham's intention to comply with the solemn command and its effect; the perfect tense ('offered') views the sacrifice as an accomplished and perfectly accepted event. In the complementary clause, v. 17b, however, the sacrifice is considered in terms of its execution; the conative imperfect tense ('tried to offer') indicates that the sacrifice was not actually made but was interrupted by the intervention of God" (Lane, 361).

v. 17 **promises** The promises relate to God's initial words to Abram in Gen 12:1-3 that specifically relate to land, spiritual blessings and descendants. These promises are ratified as a unilateral covenant by God to Abram in Gen 15. Many years later, Abraham pleaded in desperation that Ishmael (his "illegitimate" first child) be the child of blessing (i.e. - the line in which the promises would be fulfilled - Gen 17:18). God responded, "Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him" (v. 19). Once again, God affirmed that the line of his promises will go through Isaac; "...it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (Gen 21:12; Heb 11:18) "The demand for the life of Isaac was a fierce challenge to the faith of Abraham, for it threatened the integrity of the promise. It also seemed to contradict both the character of God and the depth of human affection" (Lane, 360).

v. 17 **one and only** (Gk.-*monogenes*, i.e., "only begotten son" NKJV) 'Abraham had one son by Hagar (Gen 16), and as we learn later he had six sons by Keturah (Gen 25). But only Isaac was uniquely born (the same idea is in the description of Jesus as the "only begotten," John 1:18). Indeed, the Greek term for "only begotten" is used to describe Isaac in Heb 11:17. The point is not that Abraham had no other children, but that this was the unique child in whom all the promises of God resided" (tn, Gen 22:2, *Nelson Study Bible*, NKJV).

v. 19 **reasoned** (Lit - "calculated") God has never called us to have a "blind faith." Rather, our faith is to be firmly grounded in the promises of God found in his word. Therefore, Abraham's reasoning of how God would resolve the request of the moment - with God's previously revealed promises - was not a lack of faith but a faith that consciously reasoned a plausible resolution in the end.

v. 19 **figuratively speaking** (Lit - "in/by a symbol"; "as a type" - NASB; "in a figure/figurative sense" - KJV/NKJV) While most see this statement (especially seen from the perspective of the author of Hebrews' audience) as pointing toward something beyond the story of Isaac's binding on Mount Moriah, scholars are divided as to which event it prefigures. "In a figure - meaning, probably in a manner that prefigured the resurrection of Christ. Is it this incident that is referred to in the words of Christ in John 8:56: 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad?'" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 312). Another states, "The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews nowhere regards "the sacrifice and salvation of Isaac as a type of Christ's death and resurrection," and "the idea nowhere found in the New Testament" (Simon J. Kistemaker, *Hebrews*, NTC, 328-29). Rather, "when Abraham received Isaac from the altar of sacrifice there was a foreshadowing of the future resurrection [of believers] from the dead; the great resurrection at the end of history" (Lane, 363).

v. 19 **back from death** In what sense did Isaac, who was ultimately not in harm's way, come "back from death"? The answer can be found in the depth of resolution Abraham had in his heart and mind that he was to sacrifice his son, resulting in his son's death. Note again the perfect tense of the verb "offered" in v. 17a. By analogy, we might settle in our heart and mind the imminent death of a loved one the day hospice arrives—even though they have yet to *actually* pass away.

### Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.  
**Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!**

Why? It's likely the most frequently asked question to parents. Some of my favorite "why" questions through the years include: "Why can't the dog eat off my fork?", "Why do we have to mow the yard again?" and "Why do vegetables taste so bad if they are good for you?" This week in our text we find Abraham, who should have had the biggest "why" question of all, simply choosing to trust God in a situation he didn't understand. Abraham was confident in God's plan because, first, he had a relationship with Him and, second, he had a promise from Him. During this holiday break, take some time to deepen your relationship with your family by playing this game. Write the following questions on slips of paper and put them in a bowl. Take turns drawing slips and choosing someone to ask the question to. \* When you feel sad, what cheers you up and why? \* What are the qualities that make a good friend? \* If you could decorate our house anyway you wanted to, what would it look like? \* Who would you want to be if you weren't you? \* If you could choose our next vacation, where we would go and what would we do? Take advantage and enjoy extra moments with your family this Christmas!

#### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Hebrews 11:17-19

1. In what way did God test Abraham?
2. Did Abraham obey?
3. What did Abraham believe God could do?

#### What Do You Think

1. Did Abraham trust God even though he didn't understand what God was doing?
2. Are there situations you need to trust God with?
3. Read verse 19 again. Who else do you know of in the Bible that God raised from the dead?

#### What R U Going To Do

As a family read Genesis 22:1-19 together. While it isn't exactly a Christmas story, it is a beautiful story of obedience and faith. It's also a story of our Great Provider and His loving care for us. Talk about Abraham and Isaac's trust in God and make a decision to walk in faith this Christmas season.

### MEMORY TIME

#### Core Comp

Hope- Coping with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus

#### Memory Verse

Isa 9:6 "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

### KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC \_\_\_\_ and Verse \_\_\_\_\_. Family completed **Say** \_\_\_\_\_ **Think** \_\_\_\_\_ **Do** \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.**  
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

#### *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

#### *6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).