

GOD: DEMANDER or PROVIDER?

“6just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”? 7Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. 8And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” 9So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” (Galatians 3:6-9)

In the text, we get to a very important name in human history.

Half of the world today calls him their father.

Jews, Muslims, and Christians all see Abraham as their father- that makes up half the world's population.

My daughter, sings “Father Abraham...” Now, there are kids from all over the globe, red, yellow, black, white, brown, and everything in between- singing the same song.

Jews and Muslims alike, in the Middle East, all proclaiming that Abraham is their father.

Who is this man- Abraham, and how did He become so famous, influential, and prolific?

Abraham was came from a family that worshipped pagan gods.

Now, allow me to use provocative language,

God allured/seduced Him with His goodness.

It reminds me of something Paul wrote,

“It’s His kindness that leads us to repentance.” (Romans 2:4)

Abraham had a long-term, intimate relationship with shame, he and his wife Sarah couldn't produce offspring. That was considered a disgrace in the Ancient Near East. He felt like he was failing in that area, no one would be able to continue or preserve His legacy.

When he was already 75 years old, God shows up in Abraham's life and is basically saying,

"I am everything you need, trust me, walk with me."

That was my summary, but let's go into the actual text.

The Lord had said to Abram,

"Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 2'I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)

God was not bribing Abraham through fear and intimidation, but through promise and possibility.

God was not threatening Abraham, but inviting Abraham.

That's His primary nature.

God was luring Abraham with bait on his hook.

BAIT: Blessings.

HOOK: Relationship.

What God ultimately wanted was just to be in relationship with Abraham. But to get him to take the hook, God put bait on the hook.

God promised Abraham all kinds of things that any red-blooded male can want.

Yet, we see that what God clearly wanted from Abraham, was a relationship with Him.

"God is friendship." - St. Aelred of Rievaulx

Abraham was a prototype, an example of what God wants to do with all peoples everywhere.

- We too have an array of gods that we worship in our own ways, and find our identity in.

- And as we are active in our devotion to things other than God, God is inviting us...alluring us with promises and possibilities.

- *"I want to take away your shame, I want to give you a new name, I want to empower you to prosper. Just walk with me."*

God didn't appear to Abraham and say, *"Abraham, follow me, or else I will make you burn in hell, you and Sarah- for all eternity... muahahaha.....now the choice is yours..."*

I want to reiterate this:

God was luring through positive possibilities and promises, not fear and intimidation.

God was inviting, not threatening.

For that's His primary nature.

This is what God was inviting Abraham into,

"Life is better with me.

I have what you need.

I am what you need.

I will so bless your life, the blessing will spill over to all the world.

Abraham.

You have seen yourself as a

cursed, shameful, and impotent man,

but I am going to change your identity-

you will be blessed, honored, and powerful enough to bless others!"

This is the invitation God is extending to all is the same,
“Life is better with me.”

Abraham accepts the invitation and begins his journey with God.
That journey is called faith.

Now, this God won't leave Abraham alone.

He keeps stalking Abraham, showing up, speaking the most affirming words, such as,

“Fear not, Abram; I am your shield and your exceeding great reward...” (Genesis 15:1)

I wonder if Abraham ever thought to himself,
*“What's are His motives?
Why is He so into me?
Why does He keep stalking me?
Why does He sweet talk me?”*

Abraham and God are dating you can say.
God is the pursuer.
Abraham is being pursued.
God is not just using flowery words,
but also blessing Abraham with success and protection.
But Abraham is participating.

Then in Genesis 15, they have been dating for three chapters, now God wants to take the relationship to another level.

He wants “covenant” .
This was the highest form of relationship.
It meant what is mine is yours.
It also means there is no getting out.

Death do us part.

Most of the people Abraham grew up with worshiped the sun, moon, or stars. Yet, he has gotten in touch with a God who claims to have created all that is, and now wants a covenant relationship with Abraham.

He doesn't even want a shallow acquaintanceship, but a covenant friendship.

Even now,

God is not into casual or shallow relationships, He wants deep commitment and deep connection.

It's believable that Abraham grew up with a worldview that told him: *There are many gods and they could care less about human beings.*

Now, He is experiencing one paradigm shift after another.

He is realizing there is ONE GOD, the Creator of All.

That was groundbreaking.

Secondly this God is all about relationship.

That too was mind-blowing.

He will even put blessings on the hook, to lure us into relationship with Him.

He doesn't really leave you alone.

Now there are a few things you need to know about Abraham.

- He lived before the 10 Commandments were given.
- If we judge Abraham by the Commandments, he was guilty.

Abraham's Morality Report

- **He lied again and again (Genesis 13).**
- **He ended the life of people (Genesis 14).**
- **He had sex outside of marriage and gets her pregnant (Genesis 16).**
- **He has a slave, who he can force himself upon (Genesis 16).**

Sure doesn't sound like a godly man, does he?

Sometimes, we think God only pursues the moral, and those who have it together, but Jesus made it clear,

***"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Mark 2:17)**

**God didn't call, pursue, stalk Abraham
because he was perfect,
but because he was broken.**

Someone might try to defend Abraham and suggest, ***"I know he made some big mistakes, but didn't Abraham have great faith?"***

- Kinda.
- Sometimes.
- Some days more than other days.

Abraham's Faith Report

- **He sure had his questions.**
- **He expressed his doubts.**
- **He felt He had to lie, because God won't protect him.**
- **He grew sick and tired of waiting on/trusting in God.**

He doesn't have a perfect score in morality.

He doesn't have a perfect walk of faith (trust) either.

Yet, God is into Him.

God is after Him.

God is still in relationship with Him.

God is wanting to do something wonderful through His life.

This blows my religious mind away.

After 25 years, God finally grants Abraham a son through Sarah.

They are as happy as can be.

They name their kid Isaac, which means “laughter”, because God made them laugh so hard.

I’m sure their many laughs were healing their souls from the many tears.

He’s a hundred, she’s ninety, and they are new parents.

But, then God acts freakishly schizophrenic.

He’s going to ask for the life of Isaac.

(Genesis 22)

“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. ²Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” (Genesis 22:1-2)

What would Abraham be thinking?

“Oh, I see. He’s just like the other pagan gods I grew up learning about, we need to appease him by giving Him what’s most dear to us. He demands. He’s out to take from me. Maybe this is what He wanted all along, he just want to befriend me because He is thirsty for the blood of my son.”

“³Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded 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.” (Genesis 22:3)

Don’t you wonder why Abraham doesn’t argue with God?

When God told Abraham he was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham argues with God.

But why isn't there a peep, when God asks Abraham for his son?

1) Now that they are in covenant relationship, Abraham has to give to his God what his God is demanding. That was the nature of covenant relationship as commonly understood.

2) Child-sacrifice was a common practice in the Ancient Near East.

Notice that Abraham could not take his son to any place, but had to go to the place that God would lead Him to.

“⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw THE PLACE in the distance. ⁵He 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.” (Genesis 22:4-5)

Some Bible interpreters suggested that Abraham went with full assurance of faith, knowing God was going to do something - so he really wasn't sweating at all. Oh really?

Abraham is just walking briskly up the hill with a confident smile on his face?

I'm not too sure about that.

Was Abraham nervous?

1) Abraham is a human being.

2) Child-sacrifice would be prohibited in the law of Moses, but this is hundreds of years before Moses.

3) Abraham grew up in a time and region, where child-sacrifice was commonly practiced.

Now, during the time of Abraham, in the Ancient Near East, sacrificing your children to the gods was not unthinkable. It was a wide-spread practiced.

It was believed that the gods were ticked, and if you didn't give them a portion of your crops or part of the animal, they would turn on you.

If they turn on you then would shut off the rain, the crops would run out, the livestock would die off, and the people would starve to death.

When there was famine in the land, their conclusion was that the gods were angry, and to get the gods to have a change of heart- they needed to keep one-up-ing their sacrifices- whats the greatest thing a man could ever sacrifice?

What would be his most treasured possession?

His first born-son.

So they would sacrifice their children to the gods, in sincere efforts to appease their gods, to extinguish their wrath! To beg their gods to continually bless them with rain, crop, and prosperity.

Perhaps Abraham is afraid that his God was going to turn on him too.

“6Abraham 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, 7Isaac 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?” (Genesis 22:6-7)

Let's show the picture of Isaac with the WOOD on his back. Does this remind you of anyone or anything, a beloved son carrying wood on his back, up a hill?

Abraham is trying to stay positive, but perhaps he is thinking to himself, *“This God seduces with His goodness and then He turns on you, breaks*

your heart, ruins your life, taking from you all that is dear! And I can't even say 'no' because I was conned into covenant..."

“8Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. 9When 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.” (Genesis 22:8-9)

Again we see it couldn't be any place, but had to be the place God would tell him about.

If you are reading this story for the very first time, and have no idea how this drama ends, you can easily conclude:

- This God is a Full-Blown Narcissist.
- This God gets an ego fix out of your sacrifices- and you need to keep up with the ever-growing demands with His never satisfied ego.
- This God needs to be appeased for He is bloodthirsty.

Someone can also think, *“This is why nobody should be religious, religion makes people do some insane things...”*

“10Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. “ (Genesis 22:10)

Abraham is shaking.

He's broken out in a cold sweat.

This is the worst day of his life.

11But 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.”

This was a three day journey, and on the third day the story takes another sudden and drastic TURN!

By the way, God has a way of making you believe one thing for a few days and then on the third day saying, “SURPRISE!!”

For a few days, all the disciples of Jesus were mourning, thinking, “We left everything to follow this guy, who we thought was the Messiah, and now he’s gone...” but then on the third day, He is raised from the dead, and God says, “SURPRISE!!”

On day three, God shows up and says, “SURPRISE! LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT I’M ALL ABOUT.”

13Abraham 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.”

Abraham summed up His wild adventure three day adventure as:

THE LORD WILL PROVIDES.

JEHOVAH JIREH was the declaration he made.

Abraham didn’t call that place: JEHOVAH SCARY, but JEHOVAH JIREH.

Not the LORD WILL DEMAND, but THE LORD WILL PROVIDE.

The point of the story is NOT:

A narcissist God who makes unrealistic demands.

He will coerce you with fear.

He will turn on you if you do what He says.

The point of the story is this:

He really is NOT like the other gods.

He is not the God who demands, but provides.

He's not merely a requiring God, but an enabling God.

Back to the book of Galatians.

Those promoting *circumcision* were essentially declaring that He was a demanding God, but those who preached the cross were declaring that He is ultimately a supplying God.

**God doesn't merely demand righteousness.
He supplies/provides righteousness.**

**God doesn't just demand we change our lives.
God supplies His Spirit to work in us.**

He won't demand without supplying.

**His character is that which:
loves to supply, rather than loves to demand.**

**He's not about TAKING what's dear to you.
He's about GIVING you what's dear to Him.**

The false message: "God just TAKING from you what's dear to you...them foreskins!"

The gospel message: "God is GIVING to you a clean slate by His blood, and a new heart by Spirit..."

Perhaps Abraham believed that God was going to turn on him, and shut off the blessing tap and rain down the curses- if Abraham couldn't perform some very difficult stuff.

God was not looking for an occasion to curse Abraham, but to reveal Himself to Abraham in a deeper/truer/richer way.

God is relationship.
He loves to know you and reveal Himself.

Therefore, **God will allow obstacle courses, not as exams designed to fail you, but as dates to know you and be known by you.**

What we call a trial, He calls a date.
What we call tribulation, He calls a bonding exercise.
What we call torture, He calls team building.

When we can see it as He sees it, we can enjoy the process more.

Abraham got a different message on the third day than he did on the first or second day. It was **PROGRESSIVE REVELATION** or **EXPANDED CONSCIOUSNESS**.

The first two days, he had mixed thoughts/feelings about God's heart, but on the third day, he had crystal clear revelation.

**The first two days, God looks like the DEMANDER.
On the third day, we see God is actually the PROVIDER.**

**If God is the demander, then God is needy.
If God is the provider, we are needy.**

Now, this is fascinating...

It's not a coincidence, but the mastermind of God...

Do you recall how Abraham had to perform the sacrifice at a certain place.

God was very particular about THE PLACE.

Well, check this out...a few thousand years later, on the very same hill, at the exact same location that God led Abraham to- it would be known as Golgotha, or the place of the skull, right outside of the city of Jerusalem, and there God would reveal His true character again, as God's Son- Jesus would hang, and die for the sins of the world.

He would reveal again that HE is not the DEMANDER, but the PROVIDER.

He's not the God that demands righteousness, but supplies righteousness.

Not demanding justification, but supplying justification.

Not demanding salvation, but supplying salvation.

God told Abraham about THE PLACE.

- For Jesus said, **“Abraham saw my day and was glad...” (John 8:56)**

- God let His friend Abraham in on what he was going to do. God seemed to be doing that with Abraham already (Genesis 18:17).

It's possible that God told him,

“Abraham, I know you thought I was demanding your son...but thousands of years later, I am going to provide my son, and he will die for the sins of the world...although your son was saved, mine will be cursed and tortured. You see I'm not a God that demands sacrifice FROM you (as other religions suggest), but I am a God who will provide a sacrifice FOR you. My son will suffer and die for the sins of the world, so all the world can know my heart for humanity, that I am a provider/not a demander. My Son will be from your lineage, and through Him laying down His life on this hill, I will fulfill my promise to you- that through your descendent- all the families of the world will be blessed.”

This is why Abraham named THE PLACE, not the LORD HAS PROVIDED, BUT THE LORD WILL PROVIDE.

“The Lord Will Provide”. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” (Genesis 22:14)

Maybe this is what Paul is talking about when he said that God preached the gospel (or good news) to Abraham (Galatians 3:8).

The good news is not that God will demand, but that God will supply.

Do you know a God who demands or a God who supplies?

Kathleen Dowling, an activist in the Hospice movement, wrote, how that after spending the last few moments with hundreds of people at the imminent end of their lives, that the ones who were most afraid to die, were the religious ones.

It broke my heart and I could relate.

It's easy to believe in a God who demands, and were aren't sure if we have ever done enough.

We know that Abraham FEARED God - when he knew what God was demanding. But on that third day- He came to LOVE God when He learned what God was supplying.

Martin Luther, the reformer, was a very devout priest.

Tried his best to serve God, in fasting, in prayer, he tried his best to meet all of God's demands.

He had so much anxiety when serving the elements, that he almost passed out because of fear.

His wrote in his diary, how he only knew God as a dreadful judge,

“I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners...I was angry with God...threatening us (helpless sinners) with wrath...” - Martin Luther

He was very religious and extremely devout, but his heart was not converted, he was not experiencing God’s salvation, until he was meditating on a Scripture in the book of Romans and it occurred to him, “God is not DEMANDING righteousness from me, but PROVIDING righteousness for me...”

He now saw everything in the Scriptures through that lens....and he liked what he saw...his heart was liberated, his life was transformed, and he finally fell in love with a God who loves unconditionally.

For the first half of his life, Martin Luther was stuck in the Day 1 and 2 revelation of who God is, “the God who demands” and then on Day 3, he was able to see that he missed it completely, God is actually the God who supplies.

Abraham was a prototype.

- We too should know that the Creator God wants to be in a serious, committed relationship with us.
- He’s not into the perfect, He’s into the broken.
- Therefore He is pursuing us, stalking us, and will not relent.
- He is bribing us with His goodness.
- He wants to us to know Him, NOT AS A DEMANDER, BUT AS A PROVIDER.
- He is not the GOD WHO JUST REQUIRES, BUT THE GOD WHO ENABLES.
- TRUST THAT HE IS YOUR SUPPLY!