

What Does It Mean to Follow God's Call Obediently?

Have you ever wondered what it truly means to follow God's calling in your life? Sometimes God asks us to step out in faith, even when we can't see the full picture. The story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 provides one of the most powerful examples of obedient faith in all of Scripture.

The Ultimate Test of Faith

God's Shocking Request

In Genesis 22:1-2, we read: "After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'" - Genesis 22:1-2 English Standard Version (ESV)

This request seems impossible to understand. God was asking Abraham to sacrifice the very thing he loved most - his promised son Isaac. But to understand Abraham's response, we need to look at his history with God.

Understanding Abraham's Journey

Abraham's story began 25 years earlier when God first called him in Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" - Genesis 12:1-3 English Standard Version (ESV)

Abraham was 75 years old when God made this promise. He and Sarah had longed for children but remained childless. For 25 years, they waited. During this time, they experienced frustration, doubt, and even tried to help God fulfill His promise in their own way. Yet through every mistake and moment of weakness, God remained faithful.

When God Fulfills His Promises

Isaac's Miraculous Birth

Finally, when Abraham was 100 years old, God fulfilled His promise. Genesis 21:1-3 tells us: "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac." - Genesis 21:1-3 English Standard Version (ESV)

Sarah's response captures the joy and wonder: "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.' And she said, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'" - Genesis 21:6-7 English Standard Version (ESV)

Why Would God Ask for Isaac Back?

This makes God's request in Genesis 22 even more difficult to understand. Why would God ask for the very thing He had promised? The answer lies in understanding that God's invitations and callings often make no worldly sense. They require faith that goes beyond human logic.

The Journey to Mount Moriah

Abraham's Immediate Obedience

Abraham's response is remarkable: "So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." - Genesis 22:3 English Standard Version (ESV)

There's no recorded hesitation, no argument with God. Abraham simply obeyed. This wasn't blind obedience - it was informed faith based on a lifetime of experiencing God's faithfulness.

The Conversation Between Father and Son

During their journey, Isaac asked the obvious question: "And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.' So they went both of them together." - Genesis 22:7-8 English Standard Version (ESV)

Abraham's response reveals his faith: "God will provide." He trusted that somehow, someday, God would make a way.

How Could Abraham Do This?

Faith in God's Character

The only way Abraham could raise a knife over his beloved son was because he knew who was asking him to do it. He had seen God be faithful for decades. He understood God's power over death and believed in God's promises about the coming Messiah.

Jesus himself confirmed this in John 8:56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." - John 8:56 English Standard Version (ESV)

God's Provision

At the crucial moment, God intervened: "But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.' And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." - Genesis 22:11-13 English Standard Version (ESV)

What Does This Mean for Us Today?

God Still Calls Us to Obedience

Just like Abraham, God calls us to step out in faith. Sometimes it's leaving a comfortable job to follow His leading. Sometimes it's opening our homes to children in need. Sometimes it's using our gifts to serve others, even when it feels risky.

We Don't Walk Alone

God designed us to walk in community. When we seek Him and follow His calling, we're not meant to do it alone. We need others to encourage us, challenge us, and walk alongside us in obedience.

Everyone is an Influencer

Whether we realize it or not, we all influence others. The question is: will we influence others toward obedience to God? When we step out in faith, others see God's faithfulness through our lives.

Modern Examples of Faithful Obedience

Saying Yes to the Unexpected

Consider a family who received a call about adopting a newborn - their fourth child when they had planned on only three. Despite financial concerns and logistical challenges, they said yes. God provided through their community, and now two siblings get to grow up together.

Following God's Leading to New Places

Another example involves someone who felt God calling them to completely change their environment - moving their family across the country based on one word from God: "environment." Despite the uncertainty and challenges, they stepped out in faith, trusting God's leading.

Using Our Gifts for God's Glory

Even something as simple as an eighth-grader singing "Hallelujah" at school can be an act of obedience. When she chose to use her gift despite potential embarrassment, God used her obedience to encourage a teacher who desperately needed to hear that song.

Life Application

The challenge for each of us is to listen for God's voice and respond with obedient faith. Like filling up a car with gas - we may not see exactly how God will work, but we trust that when we're "filled up" with His Spirit and direction, we're ready to go wherever He leads us.

This week, take time to sit quietly and listen for God's voice. What might He be calling you to do? It could be something small you can do today, or something bigger that requires long-term planning. The key is being willing to say, like Abraham, "Here I am" when God calls.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is God asking me to trust Him with that I'm holding too tightly?
- How can I influence others toward faithful obedience through my own actions?
- What step of faith is God calling me to take, even if I can't see the full picture?
- Who in my community can encourage and support me as I seek to follow God's calling?

Remember, God is faithful. He has proven Himself throughout history, and He will prove Himself faithful to you as you step out in obedience to His voice.