

## Connecting the Old and the New

### *Take My Son*

What is a promise? Do they mean? This week we will learn what it means when God makes a promise.

#### **The Promise of Isaac**

Abraham exhibited trust in God not simply by believing facts about Him, but by trusting His character. Abraham's actions were a direct result of his faith. When God makes a promise, He's not only able to fulfill it, but He's also faithful to see it through. It's not always easy to believe God, especially when your circumstances indicate that He's unbelievable, but faith isn't based on what things look like at the moment: it's based on who God has proven Himself to be.

In Genesis 15 God makes a covenant with Abraham. It involves his offspring and what God will do. Sarai was Abraham's wife and she was not having children at the time. Her servant Hagar had children with Abraham. This was a big bone of contention within the women. In Genesis 17:19 God told Abraham that he and Sarah (her name was to be changed) would have a son and his name was to be Isaac.

Now we will move on to the time when Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac.

*Read Genesis 22:1-14.*

- How did God test Abraham?
- How did Abraham respond to God's test?
- How did God spare Isaac's life?
- What substitute did God provide?
- What did God tell Abraham He would do because Abraham had not withheld his son?
- How do you deal with the consequences of bad decisions you have made in the past?
- Why did God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son?
- When and how has God tested your faith?
- In what area of your life will you ask God to give you the strength to be obedient?

Isaac is not the only child whose birth was promised in Scripture. Throughout the Old Testament we read God's promises to the people of Israel that He would send the Messiah, the Anointed One, to save and lead His people. Centuries pass, however, and the people grew weary of waiting for their Messiah to come. Then an angel appears to Mary, and God again revealed that He keeps His promises.

#### **The Promise of Jesus**

*Read Mary's account in Luke 1:26-38.*

- What do we learn about the Messiah, the promised child, from the angel's comments to Mary in verses 31-33?

- Read aloud some of the messianic prophecies from 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:1-5; and Psalm 89:3-4. Discuss what these prophecies reveal about the Messiah's identity and function, and discuss the importance of Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilling these prophecies.
- What are the implications of these pronouncements for you and me?
- Read verse 34 again. How does Mary's reaction to the angel's news compare with Sarah's reaction in Genesis 18:12-15?

In the angel's opening statement to Mary, he referred to her as "favored" (v. 28), and in verse 30, he added that it was God with whom she had found favor. Like the righteousness accredited to Abraham, God's favor was evidence of His grace in Mary's life.

*Read Joseph's account in Matthew 1:18-25.*

- How did Joseph plan to handle this delicate situation?
- Why did Joseph change his plans to divorce Mary?
- If Joseph wasn't the actual father of Christ, who was?
- What did the angel command Joseph to name the child and why?
- What significant mission in life would Mary's child have?
- Why is Mary's virginal conception of Christ significant?
- What does Immanuel mean?
- How did Joseph respond to the angelic message?

In all that scripture reports we see Joseph obeyed everything God asked Him to do, with his whole heart, immediately. He didn't just follow instructions; he honored everything God was doing to the best of his ability. Joseph yielded his fear of others' criticism, his husbandly desires, and the right to name the child to the Lord. In his obedience, Joseph revealed that God's unfolding plan was worth more to him than anything else. He adjusted every aspect of his life to follow. He modeled for us the obedience and the sacrificial giving that should characterize Jesus' disciples.

### **Putting it All Together**

- Read 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 2:9; and Romans 8:34. How do these verses let us know God will be faithful to fulfill His promises?
- What are you trusting God with today? Are you anxiously or patiently waiting for God to fulfill His promises?
- In what area of your life do you need to believe that nothing is impossible with God? What keeps you from believing this?
- How has the fact that "with God, nothing is impossible" taken root in your life?