



# First Things First

## Daily Devotionals

### Devotional Guide for April 8-14, 2024

These devotions are prepared for you each week by Pastor Kevin to use for your own personal devotions with the Lord, and are designed to prepare you for the message next weekend.

#### Monday, April 8<sup>TH</sup> “To obey is better than sacrifice”

**Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:22b-23** NIV

The background to this passage is that Samuel (a Levite who served God as a prophet, judge, and had anointed the first and second kings over Israel) was confronting King Saul for disobeying the Lord. True, Saul had attacked and destroyed the evil Amalekites. He did that, but he also chose to plunder the land for himself and his army. Saul took some of the animals, and tried to appease God by sacrificing some of them to His glory... a little too late. Samuel retorts to Saul: **“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice”** (v.22). Christian singer/songwriter Keith Green wrote a song that began: **“To obey is better than sacrifice; I don’t need your money—I want your life. And I hear you say that I’m coming back soon, but you act like I’ll never return.”** (“*To Obey is Better Than Sacrifice*,” Keith Green, 1978)

*Question: How can you honor God by striving to obey His Word?*

#### Tuesday, April 9<sup>TH</sup> “We will worship... then we will come back”

**Scripture: Genesis 22:1-5** NIV

This passage introduces us to the requested sacrifice of Isaac, the only son of Abraham. Faith in God, to be genuine, must be tested. On this occasion, God seeks to determine Abraham’s willingness to obey Him, by placing on Abraham the ultimate challenge: he must kill his own son. This request is highly ironic... given the importance placed upon the birth of Isaac in chapter 21. While God may test His people with their obedience, He never tempts us to do something wrong. Note this: while Abraham did not know how this challenge would end—check out what he said to his servants in verse 5: **“Stay here with the donkey, while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then WE will come back to you”** (*emphasis mine*). Abraham is confident that Isaac will return with him. According to the author of Hebrews, Abraham obeyed God, believing somehow that in these circumstances, God would restore Isaac to life again.

*Question: What would be going through your heart and mind, if God asked you to accept a challenge this large?*

#### Wednesday, April 10<sup>TH</sup> “God Himself will provide the Lamb”

**Scripture: Genesis 22:6-10** NIV

Up to this point, Abraham has apparently not disclosed to Isaac the full details of God’s instructions. Abraham’s reply to Isaac’s question about the lamb reflects either a profound trust in God that the Lord will intervene... or an attempt to conceal from Isaac the fate that awaits him. Abraham did not reveal what God had told him to do, when he told his son that God would provide a lamb. Whether or not Abraham believed God would indeed provide a substitute lamb—or raise his son from the dead—the statement is an astounding declaration of trust in God and an example for every believer. Also, no mention is made of Isaac’s response or behavior, when Abraham bound him. This silence may indicate that he did not struggle, and according to Jewish tradition, Isaac was a willing sacrifice who threw himself on the altar.

*Question: If you were Isaac, how would you react to Abraham here?*

#### Thursday, April 11<sup>TH</sup> “The Lord Will Provide”

**Scripture: Genesis 22:11-14** NIV

God intervenes, because Abraham has shown through his obedience how much he reverences God. Previously, God reckoned Abraham righteous, on the basis of his faith (see Genesis 15:6). That same faith is now made evident, by what Abraham does here. God not only intervenes to prevent Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, but He also provides an alternative sacrifice. Echoing what Abraham had said to Isaac regarding God providing the sacrifice, the name given to the place on the mountain where this altar was built became “The Lord Will Provide” (v.14).

*Question: How has God provided for you in glorious ways?*

#### Friday, April 12<sup>TH</sup> “He who had embraced God’s promises...”

**Scripture: Hebrews 11:17-19** NIV

Faith withstands the perplexing tests of life, such as the one Abraham and Isaac withstood in Genesis chapter 22. The author of Hebrews shares that Abraham “had embraced the promises” of God, and thus was willing to sacrifice his only son to the Lord. God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 21:12) was that his son Isaac would be the one through whom blessing would come to future generations. Abraham’s way through this challenge was to rely more deeply on the life-giving power of God, and God rewarded his faith.

*Question: How do you embrace God’s promises in your faith journey?*

**Sunday, April 14, 2024**

**8:30 and 10:45 am** (Livestream @10:45 am)

**Genesis 22:1-14** NIV and **Hebrews 11:17-19** NIV

Message: **“Unusual Sacrifices: Abraham and Isaac”**

Worship theme: **“Altar’d People”**

