

Study Guide: “Faith that Looks Beyond What is Seen”

Carter Sanger, Dec-09

Introduction

We admire people that can go through great difficulties in life with real peace. The self-help industry is largely built to try and help people do just that. The Bible provides an answer called faith, which invites us to look beyond the present circumstances and trust God.

Read Hebrews 11:17-23.

I. Test vs. Punishment

- Have you ever felt that life was unfairly difficult? Describe that time. What made it so difficult? Did you feel like God was punishing you?
- Read Romans 6:23. What does sin deserve? If God were punishing you, what would it look like?
- If your suffering and setbacks are not punishment but are tests, what is the purpose of a test? What were your tests in school like? What did they do to you?
- The writer of Hebrews expounds on tests in chapter 12. Read Hebrews 12:11. What is the result of the Lord’s tests?
- Read Genesis 22:1-2. How does God refer to Isaac? Is Isaac Abraham’s only son? What might God mean by this instruction?
- Have any of God’s good gifts to you – a person or a thing – become more important than God himself?

II. Could vs. Would

Read verse 19.

- What is it that Abraham considered? Did Abraham *expect* God to raise Isaac from the dead?
- Can you think of times in your life when God did not deliver in the only way you could foresee?
- How do you think changing your view of God to understand that he *could* do it a certain way from understanding he *will* do it a certain way can impact your faith?

III. Real vs. Figurative

Read verse Genesis 22:2-13.

- While Abraham considered that God could raise Isaac from the dead, what actually happened? Why did Abraham not have to sacrifice his son?
- Ultimately, it wasn’t the ram that served as a substitute for Isaac. It was the one to whom the ram pointed – Jesus. Jesus’ resurrection was the basis and foundation for Isaac’s as well as yours. Was God’s answer to Abraham’s dilemma greater than what Abraham imagined? How does this impact your own perspective?
- Read Hebrews 12:5-9. Who is it that the Lord disciplines (or “tests”)? Through faith in Jesus you are a son (or daughter) of God. How does this change your view of God’s tests?

Wrap-up

- God’s tests are hard and you may never fully understand how God is using them. God uses tests to draw us ever closer to Himself. Do you find yourself pushing away or drawing nearer to God when you are tested?