

Bible Reading Together during this Covid-19 Shutdown

September 27-October 3: Read **Genesis 22 & Gospel of Mark 3-4**

Genesis 22

Abraham's life was full. He received the three-fold promise of land, child, and God's presence. And in his contented life, God visited him for a test. Essentially, God is commanding him to give up something that is as important to him as his relationship with God. It's an unfair test. But Abraham is up to it and so he agrees to take it.

Further Study & Discussion

- This was like a final exam for Abraham. All his life's faith training led up to this moment. So, what did he do to pass the test? Talk about his faith moments in this story.
- Talk about Abraham's emotions as he took three days to travel to the mountain where he would have to sacrifice his only son. If you are a father, how difficult is this command of God?
- As a result of this test, Abraham firmly saw God as the Provider of all things, Jehovah Jireh (v.14). Talk about a name of God, a promise of God that is especially meaningful to you.

Gospel of Mark 3

Mark is full of stories about Jesus in condensed form. It's still early in his 3-year ministry, and we have healings, casting out demons, family matters and calling of disciples.

Further Study & Discussion

- Healing on the Sabbath that opens the chapter shows two groups of people that say they love God. Jesus is compassionate and kind and wanting to heal. The religious people at the synagogue are judgmental and hard-hearted (v.5). What kind of worshiper of God do you want to be?
- There is a lengthy conversation about Jesus and his relationship to the devil (v.20-30). Try to follow Jesus' argument here. And connect his argument to his win over the devil for 40 days at the beginning of his ministry.

Gospel of Mark 4

Most of this chapter focuses on his great teachings. The parable of the sower and the four types of soil, and several parables on the expansion of the kingdom of God. And the chapter ends with a very human Jesus who is exhausted and sleeping through a storm, inside an unstable boat. But then he reveals his very divine Jesus in quieting the storm with a command (like Genesis 1).

Further Study & Discussion

- Four types of soil are always around Jesus, and in the church today. What type of soil do you think you are?
- In v.21, he talks about how we hide our identities as Christians. And then he talks about secrets and fear of being disclosed. We are reminded that our Christian identities are to be shown visible to all, and if we have embarrassing secrets, we'd better walk away from them and burn them down (Lot and Sodom story of Sept 20 reading).

- In the last story of Jesus calming the storm, the disciples cry out, “Rabbi, do you not care that we are perishing?” Are there times when we feel like calling God out like that? Talk about those moments with God, and hear Jesus responding to you like he did to the disciples (v.40).