

Facilitator Notes for "Knowing God by Name"

Lesson 9 – Yahweh Jireh – The Lord Provides - Genesis 22:1-14

PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.

Questions

In the Bible, the compound names of *Yahweh* usually arise out of a particular event that portrays some aspect of *Yahweh's* character that *meets a human need*. To study the name *Yahweh Jireh* – *The LORD Provides*, we will again pick up the story of Abraham in one of the last recorded events of his life. So far in these lessons, we have examined three different events in Abraham's life. In **Lesson 3, Genesis 16**, we saw how Abraham and Sarah tried to fulfill God's promise of a child in their own way which led to complicated consequences with Hagar; in **Lesson 4, Genesis 17**, we saw God renew his promise to Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son of their own in spite of their advanced age; and in **Lesson 6, Genesis 21**, we saw Abraham after the birth of Isaac calling on the *Eternal God* after he made a treaty with Abimelech that allowed him to settle down in one place and enjoy his son Isaac, the fulfillment of God's promise, in peace. After all that Abraham had been through, one would think that this was a good way for Abraham to spend the rest of his earthly life. But, as we shall see, Abraham had one, last, great crisis of faith to experience.

Read **Genesis 22:1-14** slowly and carefully. **When you read this story in your small group, you may want to have different ones take on the role of narrator, God, Abraham and Isaac.** Even if you are familiar with this story, take in, again, the details of this story as you enter the drama of this event. Empathize with Abraham with what he must have been thinking and feeling.

1. What is your reaction to this story? What questions does it raise? What impressions does it leave with you? What, in the story, is hard for you to understand? What, in this story, speaks to your heart?

Share as a small group your answers to these questions. Was there things in common in your answers? Ask your group if their answers changed after they did the lesson.

2. What was the purpose of this event (**22:1**)? What are some the things that made this test so difficult for Abraham (**22:2**)?

God was **testing** Abraham faith and obedience. This test was particularly difficult because God was asking Abraham to sacrifice something is **ONLY** son – whom he loved so much. This was not a "temporary" test – but one that required Abraham to give up his son to death. Abraham had waited 25 years of Isaac who was finally born when Abraham and Sarah were advanced in age. Also, the test did not make sense to Abraham because Isaac was God's gift to Abraham. Why was God taking away the very thing he had given and through whom he had promised that all the nations of the world would be blessed?

- ♥ What comes to mind when you think of something being *tested*? What do you hope to find out from a test? (You may want to look up "test" in a dictionary.) **A test reveals the true substance or quality of something or someone. It may be given to see if something is "genuine."** The dictionary defines as *test as a procedure intended to establish the quality, performance, or reliability of; an event or situation that reveals the strength or quality of someone or something by putting them under strain.* A test can also purify a substance and remove it impurities – as in silver or gold.
- ♥ What emotions and thoughts would you have had if you were Abraham? Do you think a "test of faith" has to be difficult or involve some type of suffering? Why or why not? **There has to be some level of stress in order for a test to do what it is supposed to do. It wouldn't be a test if there was not some level of difficulty.** The "strain" of the test is what reveals the quality of what is being tested.
- ♥ What is the difference between a *test* and a *temptation* (**James 1:13-15**)?

A temptation is a desire to do something wrong, sinful or evil, God **NEVER** tempts us to do wrong. Our desire to do wrong comes from within – out of our broken, sinful nature. Playing into our sinful nature, the Satan and his kingdom will also tempt or entice us to do wrong.

God may put us in a difficult situation, however, to show the quality of our faith or obedience and to prove our commitment. **Temptations** are meant to pull us away from God; **tests** are designed to draw us closer to God, helping us to grow and mature and become more like Jesus. The most important spiritual asset we have in this life is our FAITH or TRUST in God and God is constantly working to grow and strengthen our trust in him.

3. According to the verses below, what results from a test of our faith?

Verses	Results
Deuteronomy 8:2	A test of faith humbles us and makes us realize we are dependent on God; a test reveals what is truly in our hearts – whether we will obey or go our own way.
Zechariah 13:9	Like the refining of silver and gold, a test will burn the impurities from our life and leave behind only what is genuine.
James 1:2-4, 12	Testing results in perseverance and endurance (not giving up) which makes us strong and character and ready for anything; endurance in a test brings God's blessing and the reward of the <i>crown of life</i> .
1 Peter 1:6-7	test prove that our faith is genuine – which brings us praise, honor and glory when Jesus returns

♥ Who benefits from a test of faith? God? Us? Others? How so? God knows what is in our hearts, so a test usually shows us what is in our heart. Tests benefit us because they reveal weaknesses and help us grow. Tests often show us idols in our heart that we don't even know are there. Our tests of faith can also benefit others because they can learn from our example – just as we are learning from Abraham's test of faith.

♥ Do you personally think that the benefits or results you may receive from a test of your faith is worth going through it? Why or why not? Is there any other way to get these results? Why or why not? If there were some other way to experience the growth, maturity and endurance that comes from the testing of our faith, God would spare us the test. God puts us through a test because there is not other way for us to see what is in our hearts.

♥ What circumstances or events have tested your faith? What were the results? Where do you sense God is testing you now? How are you doing? What are you learning?

4. For Abraham, the test of his faith involved *sacrifice* and *obedience*. *Sacrifice* can be defined as "giving up something of great value for the sake of or to gain something of greater value." *Obedience* is "compliance with someone's wishes or orders in acknowledgment of their authority – even when you don't want to or understand why." What was Abraham's "sacrifice" and how did he demonstrate "obedience"?

Abraham's sacrifice was his willingness to give back to God what God had given him. His obedience proved that Isaac belonged to God and not to him. He demonstrated obedience by doing exactly what God asked him to do, even though he didn't want to or understand why God was asking him to do this. Because of his sacrifice and obedience, he saw God's provision and his faith in God was made stronger than ever. He did not know how that story would end, but he believed that God was trustworthy. No doubt, Isaac was even more precious to Abraham after this test.

♥ Do the words *sacrifice* and *obedience* hold a negative or positive connotation for you? Why? What are some reasons why *sacrifice* and *obedience* are important in our relationship to God? Which of the two is more difficult for you to do? Why?

♥ Have you ever obeyed God when you did not want to or did not understand God's purposes? Was it worth it? Why or why not? When has obedience to God required you to give up or sacrifice something you loved? Was it worth it? Why or why not?

♥ What helps you say "yes" to God when everything inside of you wants to say "no"? What does *sacrifice* and *obedience* teach us? **More than anything, sacrifice and obedience teach us that God is God and we are not. He is the one in control and he is the one who provides for us. Obedience allows us to receive his provision. It shows that we are relying and trusting him and not ourselves.** How did **Isaac** demonstrate his obedience to God? **He allowed himself to be bound and put on the altar. What could he have done? He could have run away or tried to talk Abraham out of obeying God.**

5. What are some ways that Abraham demonstrated his faith in God's character, power and purposes, even though he did not know how this story would end (22:5, 7-8)?

Abraham really did not know what was going to happen and he was fully prepared to sacrifice Isaac, yet he said to servants, "Stay here with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. After we have worshipped, **WE will come back." Abraham expected to bring Isaac back with him.**

Abraham also showed his faith in God when Isaac asked him where was the lamb for the burnt offering and Abraham replied – "God himself will provide the lamb." Abraham did not know HOW God would provide the lamb, but he was sure that he would.

♥ What do you think the author might be trying to convey in giving us all the details of Abraham's actions in 22:3-10? The reader of this story is not told what is going on in Abraham's mind, but the excessive and deliberate details of Abraham's preparation for the journey and the journey itself – details that are not really needed – help the reader identify with Abraham and wonder what he was really thinking as he went through the automatic tasks that did not take much thought. We get the feeling that Abraham was "going through the motions" as his mind was furiously trying to figure out why God was asking him to do this – and how God would work it out. Why did God send him on a three day journey before he had to sacrifice Isaac? We often say that Abraham immediately obeyed God - but he also had three days to think about what God was asking him to do. It's hard to believe that he was not struggling with his thoughts and will for those 3 days. What do you think were Abraham's thoughts and feelings during this time? When have you "gone through the motions" when your heart and mind were in turmoil? How did the "motions" help? **Mindless tasks give our bodies something to do while our minds and hearts are thinking, struggling, trying to figure things out.**

♥ Do you think Abraham struggled with obeying God? Is struggling with God about *sacrifice* and *obedience* a sin? Why or why not? (**Matthew 26:36-44** may help you with your answer.) **From Jesus' example in the Garden, we know that struggling with doing God's will is not sin. God knows there will be a struggle. The important thing is what we do when the struggle is over. True obedience is not just doing the right thing because sometimes we want to do the right thing anyway. True obedience is when we do what God is asking and we **don't** want to do it!**

♥ Do you think Abraham would have actually killed Isaac? Why or why not? What does **Hebrews 11:17-19** add to this story? **Hebrews leads us to believe that Abraham would have actually sacrificed Isaac, reasoning that if he did, God would raise him from the dead.** What did this test of faith reveal about Abraham's view of God? **Abraham was absolutely sure that all of God's promises to him were fulfilled in Isaac, so even though he did not understand what God was doing, he knew that God would work it out. Trust is believing God when you have no idea how he is going to provide – yet you are sure he will.** How does your view of God compare with Abraham's?

***Tests of faith* are personal and no two are alike. This was Abraham's test of faith – given in his time, in his situation, addressing the issues of his heart. Although our *tests of faith* will not look the same as Abraham's – actually building an altar and placing a child on it – the principles behind Abraham's test of faith are the same as ours and we can learn much from Abraham's experience and example.**

Read **Genesis 22:11-14**. Again, even if you are familiar with this story, take in the details and the drama.

6. What conclusions can you come to about God from all that happened in **22:11-14**?

As we have seen in other lessons, the angel of the LORD is most likely God himself. God was aware of what Abraham was doing and called to him by name.

God stopped the test when it's purpose had been accomplished

God provided exactly what Abraham needed – in this case a ram in the thicket

If we trust him and obey him, God will provide what we need when we need it – even though it looks impossible. We can be sure that “God will see it it”

- ♥ Why does God wait until the last second to stop Abraham? God is never late, but seldom early. Abraham needed to see that there was no other way out except God's miraculous provision and that he was beyond trying to come up with his own solution. After the fact, only God would get the credit and glory for his provision. Do you think this was the "provision" that Abraham expected? Abraham knew that God would provide – but he did not know HOW God would provide. If we know the HOW, then we do not need faith. Usually God's provides for us in a way we could not have even imagined. God's provision is seldom what we expect and usually much better than what we could have imagined. What application can you make to your own tests of faith?
 - ♥ Abraham was willing to *sacrifice* Isaac to God – *giving up something of great value*. What was the *something of greater value* that he gained? In the end, Abraham still had Isaac but also a deeper love and trust of God. He was not absolutely certain that God would provide what he needed and would take care of him. He also knew that he had “passed” the test and that God was first in his heart and not Isaac. How might the test itself have changed Abraham's heart? We can speculate that God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac because there was a danger that Isaac was becoming an idol in Abraham's heart – even though he was a gift to Abraham from God. At any rate, the test itself brought Abraham to the point of choice – God or Isaac – and his faith and trust were stronger because he made the right choice.
 - ♥ Was God's provision dependent on Abraham's faith and obedience? If Abraham had not been willing to sacrifice Isaac and had not obeyed God, he would have never seen God's provision. God will not force us to obey – but we will not see what he has for us unless we do obey. Obedience makes a difference. Why or why not? Is God's provision in our lives dependent on our faith and obedience? Why or why not?
7. *Yahweh Jireh – The Lord Provides*. In the verses listed below, what do you learn about God's provision?
- Psalms 104:10-15** – God provides for everyone and everything in the world. He makes nature “work right” and provides for all the animals on the earth. He causes food to grow so that we have what we need to live. The whole earth is under his control and he provides for it all. He IS what some people call “Mother Nature.”
- Philippians 4:19** – God has promised to provide for and supply everything I need, out of his glorious riches. He will take care of me. The key word in this verse is ALL.
- Matthew 6:31-33** – God knows all my basic needs such as food and clothing and I don't have to worry about how I will get them. He promises that if I live for him and make his Kingdom my primary concern, he will take care of me and give me what I need. Because he will provide, I don't have to “worry.”
- 1 Corinthians 10:13** – God will not let a temptation to do wrong be so strong that I cannot resist it. If I'm tempted, he will also provide a way out so that I don't have to give in to it. I never have to be concerned that I will not be able to resist a temptation.
- 2 Peter 1:3** – God divine power give me everything I need to live a life that is pleasing to him. I don't have to rely on my own power or resource to live a life of love, trust and obedience. God provides the very thing he asks me to give!

- ♥ Reread the second paragraph of the *Introduction* to this lesson. What, specifically, speaks to you and encourages you about the name *Yaweh Jireh* and what do you need to believe for your life right now?
- ♥ Describe an instance when God provided for you during a difficult time. How did this change you?
- ♥ According to **Romans 8:32**, why can we be sure that God will provide all we need – whether that need be spiritual, physical, emotional or material?

This is a wonderful verse to think about and turn over in your mind. The reasoning is this: God has already given us the most valuable, precious thing he has – the life of his Son who died in our place to pay for the consequences of our sin so that we might be brought back into God’s family and be with him forever. So, why would God withhold any “lesser” gift or provision from us when he has already given us the most valuable gift? What is the logic of that? Because Jesus already gave his life, we can be sure that he will give us everything else we need to.

8. We can not consider this story of Abraham and Isaac without acknowledging that this incident was a foreshadowing of God the Father's sacrifice of his one and only Son, providing the Lamb that would take away the sins of the world. What parallels do you see between Abraham's story and the story of the crucifixion? The following verses will guide you: **22:2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14.**

- v. 2 – the giving of the only son who is deeply loved
- v. 5 – after the sacrifice, WE will come back – depicting the resurrection of Jesus
- v. 6 – placed the wood for the offering on Isaac, just as Jesus carried the cross to his own death
- v. 8 – God did provide a Lamb for a sin offering
- v. 9 – Isaac is a “type” of Christ – he was bound and laid on the altar just as Jesus allowed himself to be put on the cross
- v. 12 – Father God also did not “withhold his son – his only son”
- v. 13 – God provided a Lamb that was sacrificed “instead of” or “in the place” of us. This is picture of Jesus’ dying in our place as a substitute.
- v. 14 – On Mount Calvary, God did provide a sacrifice that paid the penalty for our sins

♥ What is the significance of God's willingness to do the very thing he asked Abraham to do? When we consider the test that God put on Abraham, we might be tempted to get caught up in the fact that God asked him to kill his son. That does not compute with us. However, God never intended for Abraham to kill his son – but it is interesting to note that God himself certainly knew what Abraham was going through in his struggle to obey. God did not ask Abraham to do something that he himself was also not willing to do.

♥ In the case of God sacrificing his own Son, how far was he willing to go? God went all the way and allowed his Son to be unjustly killed. Who was there to stop him or provide a substitute? No one was there to stop the sacrifice or provide a substitute. Jesus was the one and only substitute. No one could have taken his place. How is Jesus like Isaac? Like Isaac, Jesus allowed himself to be bound and placed on the altar (cross). He submitted to his Father’s will. How is he like the ram substitute? Like the ram that was substituted for Isaac, Jesus was substituted for us. This is why John the Baptist called out, when he saw Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

♥ Heart Therapy

BELOW IS THE SUPPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURE FOR THIS LESSON THAT CAN BE PRINTED OUT FOR SMALL GROUP TIME.

NIV

James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Deuteronomy 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

Zechariah 13:9 This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'

James 1:2-4, 12 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. **4** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

1Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. **7** These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Matthew 26:36-44 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." **37** He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. **38** Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." **40** Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. **41** "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. **44** So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, **18** even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." **19** Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Psalms 104:10-15 He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. **11** They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. **12** The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. **13** He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work. **14** He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate—bringing forth food from the earth: **15** wine that gladdens the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread that sustains his heart.

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' **32** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

1Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2Peter 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

NLT

James 1:13-15 And remember, no one who wants to do wrong should ever say, "God is tempting me." God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else either.

Deuteronomy 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would really obey his commands.

Zechariah 13:9 I will bring that group through the fire and make them pure, just as gold and silver are refined and purified by fire. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, "These are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is our God."

James 1:2-4, 12 Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. **3** For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. **4** So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything. **12** God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

1Peter 1:6-7 So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though it is necessary for you to endure many trials for a while.

7 These trials are only to test your faith, to show that it is strong and pure. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—and your faith is far more precious to God than mere gold. So if your faith remains strong after being tried by fiery trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

Matthew 26:36-44 Then Jesus brought them to an olive grove called Gethsemane, and he said, "Sit here while I go on ahead to pray." **37** He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and he began to be filled with anguish and deep distress. **38** He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me."

39 He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine." **40** Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you stay awake and watch with me even one hour? **41** Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!"

42 Again he left them and prayed, "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away until I drink it, your will be done." **43** He returned to them again and found them sleeping, for they just couldn't keep their eyes open. **44** So he went back to pray a third time, saying the same things again.

Hebrews 11:17-19 It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, **18** though God had promised him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." **19** Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

Psalms 104:10-15 You make the springs pour water into ravines, so streams gush down from the mountains.

11 They provide water for all the animals, and the wild donkeys quench their thirst.

12 The birds nest beside the streams and sing among the branches of the trees.

13 You send rain on the mountains from your heavenly home, and you fill the earth with the fruit of your labor.

14 You cause grass to grow for the cattle. You cause plants to grow for people to use. You allow them to produce food from the earth—

15 wine to make them glad, olive oil as lotion for their skin, and bread to give them strength.

Philippians 4:19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 6:31-33 "So don't worry about having enough food or drink or clothing. **32** Why be like the pagans who are so deeply concerned about these things? Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, **33** and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.

1Corinthians 10:13 But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.

2Peter 1:3 As we know Jesus better, his divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life. He has called us to receive his own glory and goodness!

Romans 8:32 Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?