

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-12 Prayer: The Discipline of Worship

When we think of the word ‘self-discipline,’ our first thought may be sports. It can refer to physical training, for instance, learning to control one’s behavior over many months in order to win a race. As followers of Jesus, we practice spiritual discipline, so we are prepared to run the race of faith. Spiritual disciplines include prayer, worship, Bible study, and meditation. In today’s story we learn how the patriarch Abraham practiced spiritual discipline.

Abraham pitched his tent in a city called Beersheba at the edge of the desert. After making a treaty of friendship with local leaders, he did two things. He planted a tree, indicating he planned to stay there. And he built an altar, where he “called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God.” This testified to the fact that he worshipped a different God than the people living in that city. He practiced the daily discipline of prayer and worship (Gen 21:32-34).

Sometime later God tested Abraham. He called to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God commanded, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you" (Gen 22:1-2). Abraham was unexpectedly asked by God to sacrifice his son. God was testing Abraham’s faith, even though God had said that through Isaac he would fulfill his promises. Abraham trusted and loved God. The test was whether he would continue to worship God in the hardest moment of his life. Abraham answered this test by obeying God. He loved God even more than he loved his own son.

The mountain was a three-day journey from Beersheba. During the journey Abraham had plenty of time to consider what God had asked of him and to pray. Would he show that love for God even in this situation? Even in his sorrow he realized that he had to do what God had instructed. He placed on his donkey the fire wood. He brought the fire and the knife for the sacrifice. The provisions for the trip were ready. Abraham, Isaac, and two servants headed to the mountain.

Throughout the trip, Abraham considered how God would fulfill his promises. God had promised Abraham, who was too old to have any more children, that he would be the father of a great nation. Abraham concluded that God had not changed his mind or forgotten his promises. God must have a greater purpose. Abraham surely meditated and listened for God’s help in this dilemma.

The writer of the Book of Hebrews tells us that, “By faith Abraham ... offered Isaac as a sacrifice.... Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead” (Heb 11:17-19). He was determined to worship God with all of his soul, strength and mind. He would not fear, for God had the perfect plan. So Abraham trusted and worshiped God as they traveled to the mountain.

Abraham spoke in faith as he told the servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you” (Gen 22:5).

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, while he carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. (Gen 22:6-8)

Abraham was faithful as he met with God at the altar. He bound Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. As Abraham lifted the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called out, “Abraham! Do not lay a hand on the boy.... Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son.... Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me” (Gen 22:10-12, 18). God provided a ram stuck in a thicket for the sacrifice! Abraham had trusted God and presented his most valuable possession on the altar of worship.

Abraham had passed the test of true worship. Abraham knew that God was worthy of worship because he is holy; he deserves all of our love and devotion. Abraham’s actions demonstrated that it is not where you worship that counts, but who you worship. With a sincere heart and his mind set on God, he acted by faith.

King David was another person who worshiped God. We can pray and meditate the same words he prayed:

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits —
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's
(Ps 103:1-5)

Do you sincerely worship God with your whole heart? The Holy Spirit dwelling in us helps us to “worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). As you practice daily prayer and worship, communing with God, and meditating on his promises, you will have the strength to obey whatever God asks you to do. If you practice spiritual discipline every day, you will successfully finish the race of life.

This lesson is **important** because it explains that learning to worship God helps to prepare a believer to live in an attitude of worship and to obey our loving Father.

The **main point** of this lesson is that we are created for one purpose—to worship our living God in our hearts and our obedience.

Your **review** questions:

1. How do we demonstrate our love for God? [Pause]
(A) If you answered, “We show our love by truly worshiping him from our heart and obeying him in our life,” you answered correctly.
2. When shall we demonstrate our love and obedience for God? [Pause]
(A) If you answered, “We show our love and obedience as we daily spend time in prayer and worship,” you answered correctly.
3. Why did Abraham decide to obey God and sacrifice his son, Isaac? [Pause]
(A) If you answered, “Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac, because he loved God more than Isaac and trusted God to be faithful to his promises,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen enough times to be able to tell the story about Abraham accurately. Then tell the story to someone close, teaching them that worship is the means of loving and obeying God. Begin to develop the habit of daily worship by meeting with God each day at a set time. Your goal is to live a life of prayer and devotion to God. Remember all he has done for you, the many blessings our holy God has poured upon you. Also, memorize these verses of worship written by King David:

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits —

Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases (Psalm 103:1-3).