

SESSION 3 – STUDY QUESTIONS

Man as Initiated and Purified – Abraham

Genesis 17 - 22

“This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.” Genesis 17:10

“Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about...’ ‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’” Genesis 22:2, 12

“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...Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.” Hebrews 11:7-19

1. Initiation of boys into manhood is almost universal in societies around the world. Can you list some initiation ceremonies from other cultures? What are the characteristics of some of these initiations?
2. Can you list some initiations in our own culture (both formal and informal)? Do you think we emphasize initiation less or more than other cultures?
3. Do we have “initiation ceremonies” within the church? How might they differ from, for example, the Bar Mitzvah in Jewish tradition?

4. Some have suggested that the apostle Paul underwent an extensive initiation into the Christian faith before he began his ministry. Can you find evidence for this in scripture?

5. For what characteristic was Abraham known among the Hebrews and early Christians? (Briefly review Romans, chapter 4, and Hebrews, chapter 11.)

6. Review Genesis 12 – 22. As you will note, Abraham was “called” on a number of occasions. Do you believe that there was a point at which he was initiated into the faith? If so, at what point do you believe he was “initiated” into the faith (the word *initiate* is not used, so a concordance will not help you)? Look especially at Chapter 17.

7. Did Abraham’s initiation begin and end on the same day? What happens to Abraham after Chapter 17? Was his faith tested? At what point did Abraham demonstrate a mature faith?

8. Do you believe that, once called in chapter 12, Abraham was ever in danger of being abandoned by God? Based on your answer, is there a lesson about grace to be learned from the life of Abraham?

9. Are there ways by which we might make the initiation into our faith more meaningful? If so, what are some of those ways? Why might “initiation” be especially important to our young men?