

LIFE Group Leader Handout

November 4, 2018

Our Journey--No Greater Sacrifice

Pastor Michael O'Connor

Scripture--Genesis 22:1-19 (vs. 1-14 shown)

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. 9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Main Idea--Good Things Can Become Idols, Displacing God in Our Lives

Abraham Sent--Even good things can become idols turning our hearts away from God. Idols rob God of His glory, break the hearts of the idolaters, and ultimately harm the idol itself.

Abraham Starts

- He acted
- He sought the Lord

Abraham Stopped

Jehovah Jireh

So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided." Genesis 22:14

Application--

- As long as Abraham never had to choose between his son and obedience to God he could not see that his love for Isaac was becoming idolatrous. Can you recall a time when you had to make a choice between God and another good thing? What was the outcome?
- What are the two responses we can have when our 'Isaacs' are under threat?
- How does the father's sacrifice of His only Son whom He loved affect how we respond to God when He identifies an idol that we need to put away?

WHAT SMALL-GROUP LEADERS CAN LEARN FROM GREAT PREACHERS

By Michael Mack

Preaching and facilitating discussions are different, but there are principles to share. As small-group leaders, we can learn how to lead vibrant, life-changing groups from a variety of sources, and we should always be looking to learn more. Why? Because God uses what we do to transform lives and grow his kingdom. While watching and listening to the Preach Better Sermons conference webcast from Preaching Rocket, I made some of my own applications for leading a small group:

Create tension. Andy Stanley talked about how he deliberately creates some tension in the beginning of his message to get people to say, "Tell me the answer to that question or problem." Stanley said, "You're never bored when there's tension."

You can do the same as you lead your group. Boil down your lesson purpose or main idea into one tension-building question that your study will eventually answer. Make it as personal as possible, and you'll draw people into a dynamic discussion. For instance, a study on James 1 could center on the key question: Is Christianity all about behavior modification?

Be the real deal. "Teachers who make an impact on their audiences don't take themselves too seriously," said Jeff Foxworthy. People relate to speakers and leaders who are authentic and open with their lives. Don't hide your struggles and hurts. While you must show wisdom when you share, be transparent and vulnerable.

Focus on others. "You cannot be thinking about yourself and make an impact on someone else," said Dr. Charles Stanley. Focus on what your group members need in order to grow, not on how well you present the lesson or on sharing your own thoughts or ideas. Dr. Stanley discussed his six-step process for developing a sermon. You can apply these to how you prepare for your group:

1. *What does my audience need?* This is where Jesus always started when He taught. If you miss this question, your discussion may be good, but irrelevant.
2. *What's the text that best helps them meet that need?* Let Scripture speak into their needs and into their lives.
3. *What does this text say?* You must always deal with what God's Word says before you can apply it to your lives.
4. *Gather material that fits the need and text.* Do you have stories to share? Particular questions to ask to get people to share their stories? Ways of illustrating a truth? A group exercise to use?
5. *Pray.* Of course you should pray throughout your preparation process, but take time to be sure you're hearing from God. Ask God, "What do you want the people in my group to get and not forget?"
6. *Outline.* As a small-group leader, this is where you put structure to your study and discussion. Outline the key points you want your group members to walk away with and jot down a few questions to get them there. It's key to narrow down your points.

Lead with the end in mind. Vanable Moody calls this "behavioral preaching," and contended that Jesus was a behavioral preacher. Do you want to make an impression or an impact? Lead your small-group study with the end in mind. It's not enough to lead a great meeting. Ask yourself, What behaviors do we want to see because of this discussion? What change in behaviors do we want to occur?

Make it practical. Moody also encouraged preachers to give people an opportunity or vehicle to apply the teaching. Provide a very specific opportunity for your group members to live out what you are discussing. Move the conversation from people's heads to their hearts, and then to their hands. This will take some creativity and also require you to step out of your comfort zone. Get your group off comfy couches and loveseats and into real-life ministry to one another and others.