

# GIVE UP WHAT IS GIVEN!

## (Genesis 22:1-19; 1 Samuel 1)

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### HUMAN'S SELFISHNESS

A little boy who needed sweets leaned against a sweets store window. A man who went to shop inside the store observed him, understood the boy was in need of sweets, had pity on him, went into the store, and bought a pack of sweets for him.

The boy filled his mouth as quickly as possible. Enjoying his intense enjoyment, the man asked the boy, "Is it good?" The boy nodded, his mouth too full to talk. The man spoke again: "May I have a piece?" Emptying his mouth just enough to answer, the boy angrily said, "No! It's mine."

He was not willing to give a piece from the pack of sweets given to him as a gift to meet his need. He failed to humble himself to share with the man who gave him the gift of sweets. The little boy did not understand that what the man asked of him was part of what the man has already given to him. A test which the little boy failed, an assessment that revealed his selfish attitude.

In our selfishness, pride and lack of understanding, we often become like the little boy.

### GIVE UP WHAT WE VALUE MOST

#### Case #1 Abraham (Genesis 22)

Abraham is man faced with many challenges and for every challenge he was tested, and his faith in God and to obey God was assessed. Let's see if he had played the little boy character.

At age seventy-five, God commanded him to leave his country, his family, his father's house, with a promise to be made a great nation - he obeyed (**Genesis 12:1**).

He was almost one hundred years old - no great nation in sight but God came with another promise - a son (**Genesis 17**). **Genesis 21** confirmed the birth of that son - Isaac and that in Isaac - the great nation will be realized.

**Genesis 22:2** Then God said, "Take now 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."

This is the first time "love" is mentioned in the Bible, and it is the love of an old man for his son. Isaac was the centre of an old Abraham's life. He loved him dearly.

God said sacrifice your son, who has become a strong, young man. The Jewish historian Josephus estimated his age at twenty-five.

We are not told how God's command affected Abraham, but putting ourselves in his position, I doubt, I will be able to sleep in the night. I will try to negotiate with God. (Just as we see in some Nollywood movies on ritual sacrifices).

It must have been heart-breaking - Abraham has bonded deeply with Isaac and who was hopeful of a great nation manifesting through Isaac.

Recall the story of a woman who lost four children in Effurun truck accident some years ago - what a tragic way to be separated from one's children after many years of bonding!

Abraham reaction was to rise up early morning to carry out God's command (**Genesis 22:3**).

After three days journey, Abraham and Isaac came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there

and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." **(Genesis 22:8-12).**

Why Abraham did give up what he valued most? Yes, the Bible says he had faith, but it was confirmed that his faith was built on the understanding that he understood that the Isaac he was offering to God is what God has already given to him.

He did not say Isaac was mine, so I will determine if he should be sacrificed. Abraham realized who gave him, Isaac – God, the Creator who can bring the dead to life. Abraham was humbled by this understanding and acted in that level. God take what You gave to me. You, God can also return him to me. I trust You!

The Hebrew writer said Abraham concluded that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense **(Hebrews 11:17-19).**

Every human being has challenges. All Christians have challenges in our lives; but, at some point, we may have to face an ultimate test. We may be asked to give up something we value most.

It could be a job, *(if it has become a means of destroying our faith and character)* or our pride *(when it eliminates humility from us)*, our possessions *(when they makes us feel self-sufficient, not needing God; when they make give as if we are having pity on God; when they define how we commit ourselves to God's work)*, or our plans and dreams *(when they seem bigger than God)* or our schedule *(when we allocate the free time in it to ourselves)*. It might even be a child, as was the case with Abraham.

**We hold on to these things tightly, do we not?** Corrie ten Boom once said, "Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open."

**Key questions:** do we believe that everything we have is God's and not ours? Are we willing to give back to God what He has already given to us? Are we confident that God is able to sustain us? Do we believe with all our hearts that God will cause all things *to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose? (Romans 8:28)?*

### Case #2 Hannah (1 Samuel 1)

In Hannah days barrenness brought a stigma **(even now)**. In a time when a woman's ability to bear children was held in high esteem, Hannah was barren.

- Who would care for Hannah in the event of her husband's death?
- How will her old age look like – without a child, without a son – desolate?

Physical gifts and deep love from her husband could not meet Hannah's emotional needs – her need for a child! Hannah's fellow wife, Peninnah, tormented her, reminding her of her childlessness **(1 Samuel 1:6).**

Have you felt the burden of emptiness and hopelessness when someone keep making mockery of your condition to remind you of what you lack, or a weakness you have?

We can only imagine her disappointment as she repeatedly failed to produce a child. None of the crude medical practices of her time could help.

Hannah turned to the direction of the house of Lord. She activated her prayer life. In spite of her prayers, this desire of her heart was not met.

**Why?** Her prayer lines were filled "the little boy" mind-set. I only need a child to:

- Quench the fire of the desperation
- Fill my purpose for living
- Elevate me in the eyes of her husband.
- Stop the mocking irritation from my fellow wife – Peninnah.

Her prayer lines were not accommodating the truth Abraham discovered - *whatever You give to me is*

*Yours, not mine and I will be willing to give it back to You, even though I value it most because You can still give it back to me!*

However, Hannah later discovered this truth - *Then she made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head" (1 Samuel 1:11).*

Hannah realized that

- Everything belongs to God, by the right of His creation (**Haggai 2:8; Psalm 24:1**). So, she humbled herself.
- She was not the possessor of her life, neither will she be the possessor of the child she needs. So, she humbled herself.

However, the very moment Hannah made her total commitment to God, the door of the answer to her prayer was opened, her countenance changed - *So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer sad (1 Samuel 1:19).* Hannah did not bargain. She asked God for a gift and then promised to give it back to Him. Such prayer is not bargaining with God because of its unselfishness.

## CONCLUSION

We need to understand that if God takes something from us, He can give us something far better in return – *remember Abraham*. Giving ourselves and everything we have to God will never make us poorer.

We, too, are restless and troubled because we have not reached Abraham and Hannah's spiritual levels. We selfishly think that we are the possessors of our lives.

We can find peace when we devote to God all we have, all we are, and all we can be. God calls us to love Him totally (**Matthew 22:36, 37**). Only when He has all of our love does He have every part of us.

***We give Thee but Thine Own!***

## REFERENCES

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