Get into the Study



a video clip of a grueling but rewarding experience. Then ask **Question #1.**

NOTE: A video option can be found at BibleStudiesForLife. com/AdultExtra.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 152 of the PSG: "When has a grueling experience been worth it?



GUIDE: Direct group members to "The Bible Meets Life" on page 153 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of trusting in God during times of testing by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

SESSION 6

Confidence in Times of Testing

THE POINT

Trust God even when your faith is tested.

LIFE CONNECTION

Faith is central to the Christian life, but trusting is often easier said than done. It's one thing for someone to tell you, "Just trust God and have faith," but it's quite another thing to put that faith into action. Abraham was tested in a way we cannot imagine, yet he trusted God. He had learned to trust God in the past, so he chose to trust God in this moment of testing.

THE PASSAGE

Genesis 22:1-14

THE SETTING

Abraham still needed refining and testing, evidenced by the fact he asked Sarah to lie again when they met King Abimelech of Gerar. Abraham did not trust the Lord, but the Lord protected Sarah anyway (Gen. 20). God promised Isaac would be born to Sarah, and He would confirm the covenant with Isaac. Isaac was born, and new problems arose with Hagar. Hagar and Ishmael had to leave. It was time for God to test Abraham like never before.

GENESIS 22:1-2

- 1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.
- 2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

KEY WORDS: Burnt offering (22:2)—A burnt offering was a sacrifice to God in worship that was entirely consumed on the altar. It symbolized the transfer of the worshiper's sin to the offering.

1 Verse 1. Abraham faced various tests, and sometimes he failed. Now he would meet his most significant test of all. God did tempt Abraham. The Hebrew verb for tempt means that God was going to prove the quality of Abraham's faith and character. God was not going to tempt Abraham to do evil. God already knew how Abraham would respond, and after the testing, others would know of his character and faith.

God has various purposes for trials in our lives. James 1:2-4 instructs believers to consider it a "all joy" to experience various trials for the "trying of your faith worketh patience." When endurance has its full effect, the believer will be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." First Peter 1:6-7 teaches that trials can refine one's faith and prove the reality of it. Abraham's testing showed the reality of his faith. James 1:12 encourages us with the truth that the one who endures trials is blessed and "shall receive the crown of life" because "he is tried." The crown of life is likely the eternal, abundant life that Jesus came to give believers (John 10:10). God uses trials to help us grow, but Satan tempts us to destroy us.

We read in James 1:13-15 that God does not tempt anyone. A person is tempted "when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Lust is the first step in temptation. The second step is deception. Abraham was enticed to deceive King Abimelech and claim that Sarah was his sister and not his wife so he might save his life from the king. God calls His followers to be truthful. The third step in temptation is disobedience. Abraham was deceptive. God does not lie, and He does not want His followers to deceive others. James 1:15 says, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin," and sin "bringeth forth death."

RECAP: We can feel tested to our limits in many different ways: parenting a child, balancing a budget, navigating a new position at work, or reconciling tension with a friend or a spouse, just to name a few. Life will always test us; we can't escape it. This also includes the testing of our faith. For our faith to be stretched and strengthened. God will allow that faith to be tested. How do we maintain trust and confidence in our faith when those times of testing come? How do we stay the course when spiritual tests seem to surpass our limits? Let's watch and learn how Abraham was able to pass his faith test.

GUIDE: Call attention to "The Point" on page 153 of the PSG: "Trust God even when your faith is tested."

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In

advance, invite one or two people in your group, or in your church, whom you know have been through truly hard seasons in the past to give testimony of how God used the testing in their lives. Choose someone who is no longer in the trial, but who has seen the completion of God providing through the trial. Ask them to come prepared to share a three-to-five-minute testimony about their situation and what God taught them through it.

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to help the group understand the importance of trusting Him during periods of testing. Thank Him for using these tests to make us more like Christ.

Study the Bible

Genesis 22:1-2



Item 7: The Journey of
Abraham poster to give
context for the events in these
Scripture verses. Point to
places and events on the map
as they are discussed.



READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Genesis 22:1-2 on page 154 of the PSG.

on pages 153-154 to help explain the geographic background for this event and its significance.

God **said unto him, Abraham.** Abraham answered, **Behold, here I am.** He was ready to listen and obey. God had spoken to Abraham before, so he was familiar with the voice of God. This chapter records the last account of God speaking directly to Abraham. However, Abraham would remain faithful to God, and Genesis 24:1 says, "The LORD had blessed Abraham in all things." God credited righteousness to Abraham because of his faith, and his faithfulness led to the blessings he enjoyed. Abraham would live 175 years, and he was old and contented at his passing (Gen. 25:7-8).

Verse 2. God told Abraham to take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering. God called Isaac Abraham's only son since Ishmael was no longer an heir, and more importantly because Isaac was the child of promise. Isaac was the son Abraham loved most, and the fulfillment of God's promises rested on Isaac. In Hebrews 11:17, the writer mentions that by faith, Abraham offered "his only begotten son." John 3:16 uses the same Greek word, where it says that God so loved the world that He gave "his only begotten Son." What a wonderful foreshadowing of the work of Christ. Abraham loved his only son Isaac, but was willing to sacrifice him at God's command.

Hebrews 11:19 says Abraham accounted "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Isaac would have died if God had not stayed Abraham's hand, so figuratively, Abraham received him back from death. Likewise, God would offer His Son on the cross to die, and the Messiah would be resurrected from the dead. In John 8:56, Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." We might question whether the foreshadowing was intentional, but it certainly is a beautiful illustration of Christ's death and resurrection.

Abraham was to take his son to the **land of Moriah.** The traditional location of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac is the site of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem, where the Dome of the Rock presently sits. The exact location is uncertain, but Moriah probably was in the Jerusalem area (2 Chr. 3:1).

As we'll see, Abraham loved God enough to sacrifice his son, and he had enough faith to believe God could bring his son back from the dead if needed (Heb. 11:19).

GENESIS 22:3-10

- 3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.
- 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.
- 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.
- 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.
- 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?
- 8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.
- 9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.
- 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.
- 2 Verse 3. Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass. He immediately set out to obey God's command. Abraham did not ask God for an explanation. Instead, he trusted God and obeyed His command. Abraham took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up. It appears he said nothing to Sarah or anyone else about where he was going or what he planned to do, though he may have said he planned to worship.

Verse 4. It took three days of travel for Abraham to reach his destination. Abraham, the two young men, and Isaac

RECAP: To be honest, God's instructions to Abraham seem incredibly outlandish—even unimaginable. Here was God asking the one-hundred-year-old Abraham to sacrifice the very son the Lord had promised him for twenty-five years. Now, after all that, God told Abraham to sacrifice him like a lamb on an altar.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 155 of the PSG: "How would you describe the difference between temptation and testing?"

Alternate: How can we identify a season of testing in our lives?

RECAP: Satan tempts us to sin to break us down and pull us away from God, but God tests us to build us up and pull us toward Himself. When we feel drawn to do something, we should wisely ask ourselves: is this a test or a temptation? If I do this, will it strengthen my faith and bring me closer to God or will it pull me away from Him? Like Abraham, the longer we walk in fellowship with God, the more we'll recognize His voice. The call to sacrifice his son may have seemed extreme, but Abraham knew well the One who was calling him.

TRANSITION: Our faith will often be tested. In the next verses, we see that we are to trust God in the midst of the test.

Study the Bible Genesis 22:3-10



READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Genesis 22:3-10 on pages 155-156 of the PSG.

RECAP: Regardless of any questions Abraham may have had, he responded with prompt obedience. Even though he didn't have all the answers, he didn't fully understand what God was doing, and he did not know how the story would end, he still proceeded. Being very aware of his own imperfections and mistakes, Abraham chose to trust in a perfect God who does not make mistakes.

on pages 155-158 to help explain the way Abraham and Isaac were likely processing this event.

left Beersheba, which was likely the main city in the Negev at the time, and their destination was probably in the area of Jerusalem. The distance from Beersheba to Jerusalem was about forty-five miles, and that would not have been a problem for the four walking with a donkey to carry their supplies. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place of God's choosing afar.

Verse 5. Abraham told the young men to stay with the donkey. He then said, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham planned to offer his son as a burnt offering as God directed. Still, he also was confident Isaac would return with him. Isaac was the child through whom God would fulfill His promises to Abraham, and Abraham knew God would somehow keep His promises.

Verse 6. Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son. We have reason to believe Isaac was a teenager or a young man at the time. The Hebrew word used for the "young men" who accompanied Abraham is the same word used to refer to Isaac as a "lad" (Gen. 22:5). Some passages also indicate that some time had passed since Isaac was born. Genesis 21:34 says that after Isaac's birth, Abraham lived in the land of the Philistines "many days," and Genesis 22:1 says that God spoke to Abraham "after these things." So Isaac was probably old enough to provide some resistance to his elderly father if he had wanted to.

Abraham **took the fire in his hand, and a knife.** Abraham carried a *fire*, which likely means he carried a torch or a flint. Knives were usually about six to ten inches long and were used to cut meat to small pieces before being brought to the table. However, Abraham's knife might have been larger since Judges 19:29 uses the same word to refer to a blade that a Levite used to cut up his dead concubine.

Verse 7. Isaac was also old enough to know that something was missing: the lamb for a burnt offering. He knew his father loved him, and he trusted his father. While Isaac may not have remembered much about Ishmael, Isaac probably had heard the story of how Ishmael had mocked him when Isaac was weaned, likely around three years of age (Gen. 21:8-14). His father sent the firstborn son away, and Isaac must have known he was

now the heir instead of his brother. His father loved him. That was clear. So Isaac must have been surprised his father had forgotten to bring a lamb.

Verse 8. Abraham told Isaac, "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." The word provide is usually translated as "see." God will see the need. Abraham answered in faith that God will provide himself a lamb. Abraham believed God sees everything and provides as needed. Abraham did not know what would happen; he only knew what God had told him to do. However, he trusted God to provide a sacrifice. After all, Isaac was the promised one, and the hope of the world rested on him. And when had God not been faithful in the past? Abraham did not tell Isaac that he would be the sacrifice. Abraham did not need to say that to Isaac, and he did not lie.

They went both of them together. The same statement can be found in verse 6 and indicates the silence each had while stepping into the unknown. If Isaac had any doubts about the intentions of his father, this would have been the time to toss the wood and run, but Isaac trusted his father and was learning to trust God as well.

Verse 9. Finally, they came to the place which God had told him of. Abraham was led by the Lord, was trusting the Lord, and was following the Lord's directions. Abraham then built an altar. He made an elevated place to offer Isaac as the sacrifice. The construction of an altar would have taken some time as Abraham gathered stones and put them in place. Then Abraham placed some wood on top of the altar. We can only imagine what thoughts were running through Isaac's mind as all this was taking place.

Then Abraham bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. The scene reminds us of how Jesus carried His cross, the wood on which He would be bound and sacrificed. There is no indication Isaac resisted his father, though he could have done so. It could be that Isaac was willing to sacrifice himself. Of course, Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself for us. Isaac's arms and feet were bound. He would not be able to leave the altar of his own will. Whether Isaac put up any resistance or not, he would soon learn that God would provide.

Verse 10. Abraham then **took the knife to slay his son.** Critics of the Bible love this story. They argue that only an evil God would command a father to murder his son, and only an evil father would attempt to do such a thing.

RECAP: When we undergo seasons of testing, we must cancel out the noise of negativity. We need to recognize that we will experience real spiritual attacks along the way to tempt us into disobedience. As the apostle Paul wrote, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). Keep pressing forward in obedience to Christ.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 158 of the PSG: "What helps you remain obedient to God during seasons of testing?"

Alternate: What impresses you about Abraham's response in this passage?

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that God's provision is always on time.

Study the Bible Genesis 22:11-14



READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Genesis 22:11-14 on page 158 of the PSG.

RECAP: At this point, no one can question Abraham's faith. With his knife raised over Isaac, he was prepared to do what no parent would dream of doing. But right at the last gut-wrenching moment, God intervened. The angel of the Lord revealed that this was a test: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Abraham's fear of God was not a fear of terror, afraid of what God might do to him if he didn't obey; rather, to fear God meant Abraham lived with a worshipful respect and love of God that played out in absolute obedience and trust.

Earlier, Abraham had told Isaac that God would provide the lamb for sacrifice. We don't know if Abraham believed God would intervene with an actual lamb, or if he reasoned that the son God had provided was also the lamb He provided. If God could provide Isaac who would be sacrificed. He could also provide another heir who would be the son of the promise. Either view shows incredible faith.

However, the Bible forbids the sacrifice of children to idols (Lev. 18:21; 20:3; Deut. 12:30-31; 18:10). The God who created all life has the authority to do as He wants, and He only does what is right and good. Of course, God would later send His own Son as a sacrifice for sin, bringing salvation to the world; it was the ultimate act of sacrificial love. Abraham's complete trust in God revealed his incredible faith. He believed that the God who sees would provide even a resurrection of his son if needed. In this way, the story provides a foreshadowing of Christ's death and resurrection.

GENESIS 22:11-14

- 11 And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.
- 12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.
- 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.
- 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

KEY WORD: Jehovahjireh (22:14)—Refers to the place where God provided a sacrifice for Abraham. The general principle is the Lord will provide what His people need when they need it.

Verse 11. Abraham prepared to plunge the knife into his son but, the angel of the Lord called unto him out of **heaven.** Abraham loved God more than he loved even his own family. Indeed, Abraham's love for God provided an example for Isaac to put the Lord first in his life as well. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God was one of the noblest actions in the Old Testament.

Verse 12. After Abraham answered the Lord, the Lord told Abraham to lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him. God never intended for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac; rather, God desired to show that Abraham loved Him more than anything or anyone. Abraham's faith was put to the ultimate test, and he did not hold anything back from God. Abraham showed he would not spare his beloved son Isaac if God desired for him to sacrifice his son. Along the same lines, Romans 8:32 says that God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." However, God would not allow Abraham to make that sacrifice. There was no need for it. God's design was to showcase the remarkable faith of Abraham and to grow Abraham's faith through this test. Isaac also had faith and trusted his father when Abraham said God would provide the sacrifice. The Lord kept Abraham from killing his son but considered it a sacrificial offering nonetheless since Abraham was willing to obey the Lord and sacrifice his beloved son.

Verse 13. Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket.

Abraham told Isaac earlier in Genesis 22:8 that "God will provide himself a lamb." The word for *lamb* could refer to either a sheep or a goat. However, verse 13 has a different word. *Ram* refers to a male sheep. In Exodus 12:5, God told the Israelites the lamb used for the Passover must be a male, so God provided a *ram* for Abraham to offer in place of Isaac.

Abraham then went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. The word for burnt offering means to "go up in smoke" or "ascend," and when a burnt offering took place, the fire consumed the entire animal at the altar except perhaps for the hide or skin, which might be given to the priest who made the sacrifice. The full destruction of the animal indicated the worshiper was giving himself completely to God. Burnt offerings provided atonement for sin and renewed a sinner's relationship to God. The burnt offering of a male lamb prefigured the work of Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world and bring reconciliation between a holy God and sinful man. The concept of substitution is clear as Abraham offered the ram iin the stead of his son.

Verse 14. The Lord saw Abraham's need, and provided what was needed, so Abraham named that place Jehovahjireh, which means "The LORD Will Provide."

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 160 of the PSG: "What do we learn about God's provision from this passage?"

RECAP: As we go through seasons of testing, may we remember that in every trial and testing we face, Jesus can relate. What a confidence booster knowing that Jesus is in our corner. Lock your sights on the one who truly understands. Place your faith and trust in the One who's been there and has carried more weight—the weight of our sin—than we will ever have to carry.

God will always provide. He may not always provide exactly what we want or provide on our timetable, but He will provide—and He provides what we truly need when we need it.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 160 of the PSG: "What lessons have you learned from periods of testing?"

Alternate: What are some ways we can shore up our faith now so that we can trust God during times of testing?

DO: Direct group members to complete "Engage" on page 160 of the PSG to help reinforce "The Point."

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" for this session: "Trust God even when your faith is tested."

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):

In advance, enlist two volunteers to role play the scene described in today's Scripture passage. Afterward, invite group members to describe their emotional reactions to the biblical account as played out by the volunteers. Encourage them to share situations in which they have faced tests in life and offer testimonies about how God worked. Then close in prayer.

Not only would the name of the place be a memorial of what God did there, but also it would become a proverbial saying of encouragement. When an Israelite was obedient to God and in need, a friend could say, **In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.** Trust and obey and God will provide, just as God provided for Abraham.

The life of the apostle Paul is a wonderful example of the truth that the ultimate way God provides for us through Jesus Christ. Paul said in Philippians 3:10 that his goal was to "know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." In Philippians 4:13, he wrote, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Paul expressed thanks to the Philippians for meeting his needs, but he also told them he was not seeking the gift; he sought "fruit that may abound to your account" (v. 17). He was more concerned about them than himself. He gratefully added that he was "full" (v. 18) and assured them that "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (v. 19). As we seek to obey God, He can meet our every need too. He can meet our needs by His Spirit working in us or by His Spirit working through others. God promises to meet the needs of every Christian who seeks to be obedient to Him, and that is one of the most reassuring promises in God's Word. May it be said today for the faithful believer as it was in ancient Israel, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

ENGAGE

What are some specific actions that show we trust God during times of testing? Use the acrostic below to record your answers. (An example has been provided.)

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LIVE IT OUT

We are to trust God even when our faith is tested. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Ask.** Where might God be testing you with what seems like a ridiculous request? Have you been delaying, or are you obeying promptly? Where might the enemy be tempting you physically or mentally to get off course?
- ▶ Remember. Take a moment to look back on God's track record in your life. Write down where have you seen God show off His power. Take some time now and ask God to continue to show off in your seasons of testing.
- ▶ **Share.** Where have you seen God's prevention as protection played out in your life? Take some time right now to thank Him for that prevention. Then share that testimony with someone who may need to hear it in the coming days.

Live It Out



READ: Direct group members to page 161 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the applications to carry out this week.

Wrap It Up

SUMMARIZE: Read or restate this idea from page 160 of the PSG:

In those moments when God doesn't provide what we think we need when we need it, trust Him. Trust that He has something even better planned down the road for us.

PRAY: Thank God for not only giving us times of testing but for helping us succeed. Ask Him to help group members trust in Him to see them through.



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COMING NEXT QUARTER

IRREFUTABLE: PROPHECIES THAT POINT US TO JESUS

Session 1	God with Us	Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25
Session 2	The Light in the Darkness	Isaiah 9:1-3; John 1:1-9
Session 3	The Savior Who Came to Us	Luke 2:4-12,16-20
Session 4	The King Who Reigns Forever	Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1:26-33
Session 5	The Light and Glory of God	Luke 2:25-35
Session 6	The Ruler Who Cares for His People	Micah 5:2-5a; Matthew 2:1-6,9-11

Seeking Justice in an Unjust World

Special Focus Seeking Justice in an Unjust World Obadiah 1-4,10-17

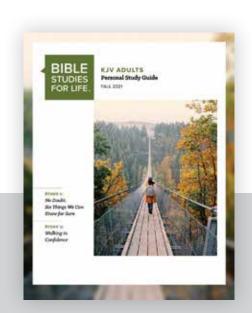
How to Avoid Life's Pitfalls

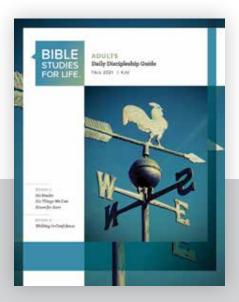
Session 1	The Pitfall of Betrayal	Genesis 37:1-5,19-24,26-27
Session 2	The Pitfall of Temptation	Genesis 39:1-12
Session 3	The Pitfall of Injustice	Genesis 39:21-23; 40:4-8,20-23
Session 4	The Pitfall of Hard Times	Genesis 41:28-32,47-54
Session 5	The Pitfall of Bitterness	Genesis 45:1-5,9-11
Session 6	The Pitfall of Guilt and Grudges	Genesis 50:15-21

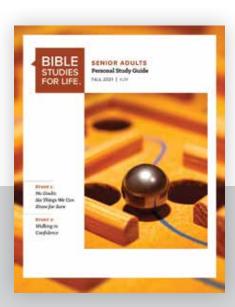


FROM SUNDAY TO EVERYDAY

WITH THREE DIFFERENT KJV OPTIONS







KJV ADULTS

This is an excellent option for groups that have a broad age range. Participants are encouraged to study prior to attending the group time. Both a Personal Study Guide and Leader Guide are available.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (KJV)

This new resource is an alternative approach to the traditional *Personal Study Guide* and *Leader Guide*. It includes five daily devotions to read after the group meeting to reinforce the learning all week. No pre-meeting study is required. This resource includes a Leader Guide and is a great option for Young Adult and Adult groups.

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NO DOUBT: SIX THINGS WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE

This study examines the assurances we're given in the Book of 1 John. We can be absolutely sure of the things of God and the way He seeks to work in our lives.

WALKING IN CONFIDENCE

This study looks at the life of Abraham, a man whose life seemed to be continually upended, and in each case, he had to choose whether or not he would trust God and walk by faith. The example of Abraham encourages us to walk in confidence because of the One we're trusting in.

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