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**1. Sunday Summary:** This morning we began a new series that we're calling *Lessons from the Desert*, based on the lives of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This morning we looked at the life of Abraham and explored what his story teaches us about growing in faith.

- a) Growing in faith is a long distance race; not a sprint – so often we get frustrated when we don't see growth, or growth seems incremental. We need to be patient. This final, and most difficult test of Abraham's faith only comes after he's been walking with the Lord for 80 years or more.
- b) Faith grows through testing, but take heart! God will not place adult trials before people who are only children or adolescents in the faith. As we walk with him and grow, he equips us more and more to bear up under the tests we endure, and he gives us what we need to remain faithful
- c) We grow in faith when we put down what we thought we needed in our lives (in the words of the song "all the vain things that charm me most"), and instead rely completely on God to provide. The question the story asks us is: will we trust the gift or the giver?

**2. Connecting Questions:** (Interactive, life sharing, thought & feeling type stuff)

- How have you measured growth in faith in the past? Talk about how you've grown in faith in the last year? If you haven't seen any... or a whole lot of growth in the past year, then how about the last 10 or 20?
  
- What tests, or trials have you experienced that have caused your faith to grow? Did you ever think you wouldn't get through those times? What kept you going? Did you find at the end you did have what you needed to get through?
  
- What are you holding on to that God might be asking you to put down? What are we holding onto as a church? How will we trust God to lead us to the next place we need to go?
  
- What insights from today's message were most helpful for you?

**3. Truth Questions:** (What does the Bible say?)

- Think together about some other passages that deal with the topic of growing in faith. Can you think of any? What might they add to the conversation?

- Read Hebrews 5:11-14 together. According to the writer of Hebrews what marks a mature Christian from an immature one? Also according to the writer of Hebrews, what is the purpose for which we grow in maturity? What do you think of his assessment of that purpose?
- Read 2 Peter 1:5-8. What do these virtues have to do with growing in faith? How can you add these virtues to you faith?

**4. Formation Questions:** (Taking it further, How does the Truth change the way I live?)

- What concrete steps can you make to sink the gospel truth that we dealt with today deeper into your life throughout this week? What will you do about the message you heard today?
- What will you do to continue to grow in your faith this week? What is God asking you to put down today in order to trust him more? How can/will you do it?
- How will you use today's learning to help you to live out your call to living a holy life this week?

**5. Resources for Further Study:**

1. Peterson, Eugene. *Practice Resurrection: a Conversation on Growing Up in Christ*. (William B. Eerdmans Publishing C.: Grand Rapids, MI. 2010).
2. Buchanan, Mark. *Hidden In Plain Sight: The Secret of More*. (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, TN. 2007).

