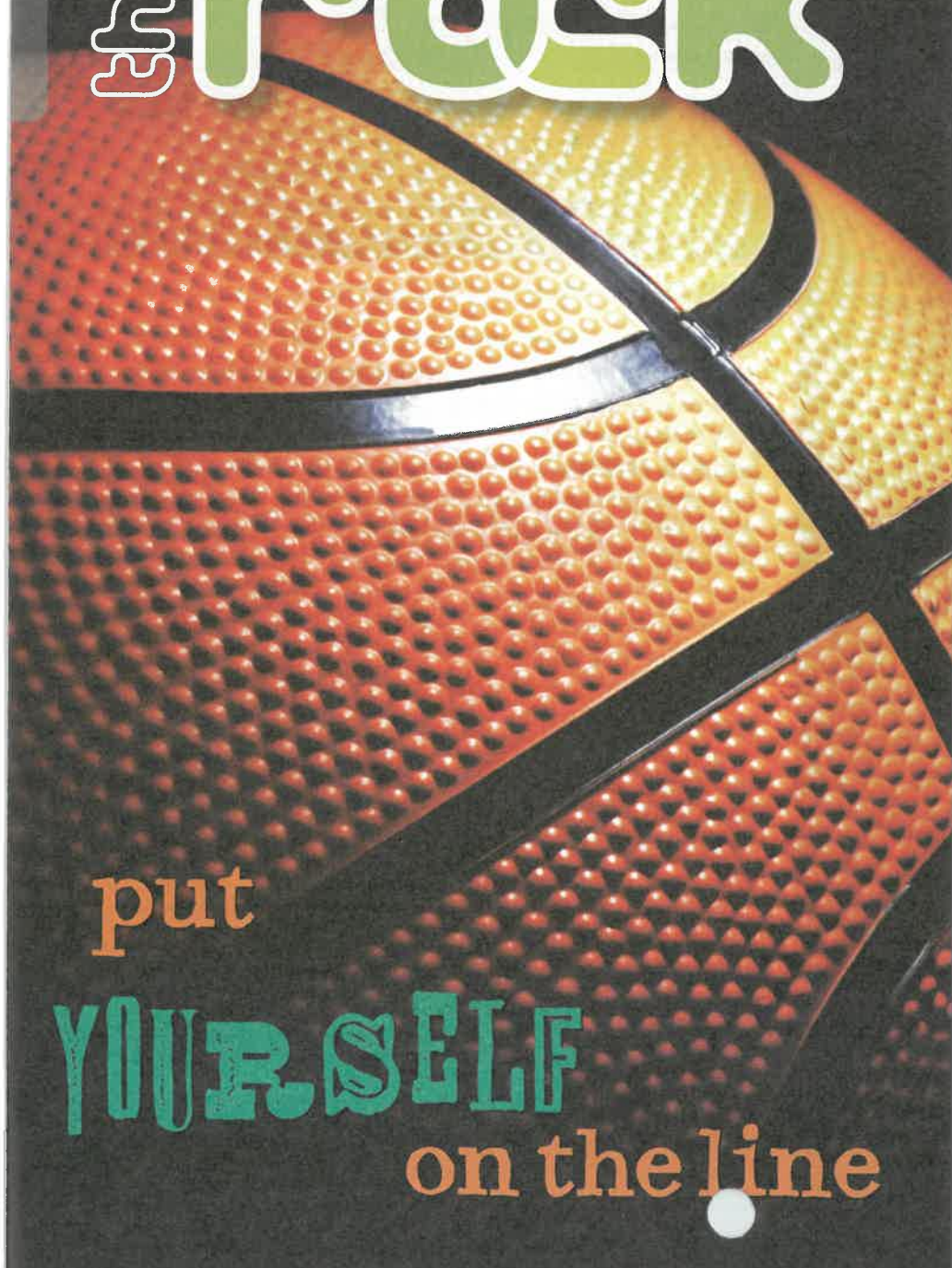


the rack



put

YOURSELF

on the line



put **YOURSELF** on the line

Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.
Genesis 22:12

When God tested Abraham with his son Isaac, it immediately became clear that God was testing Abraham's love and obedience. Throughout history and even today, people face other kinds of tests—choices between God's way and the way of a society, or even between God's way and another way that seems right but is really wrong.

the price of **SUCCESS**

For some, the hardest test in life is success. A. C. Green achieved something millions have dreamed about—being drafted into the NBA. During the draft season, Green, who was drafted by the L. A. Lakers, was asked whether he could remain a Christian even if his values weren't accepted by his teammates. Although the answer to that question was a given (Yes!), going God's way was not always easy. As Green describes in his book *Victory*, "Victories are one of Satan's open doors of opportunity." Victories, in the form of NBA championships and being part of an All-Star team were just a few of the "open doors."

A. C.'s first steps to going God's way were to accept Jesus as his Savior and develop a solid relationship with Him. This began while he was a teen. During his rookie season with the Lakers, Green ("Junior" to his friends) became known as "the oddball" after his teammates became aware of his Christianity. Because of this, they refused to invite him to some team gatherings, fearing that he would "ruin" the fun.

While in Los Angeles, Green also realized that the fame of being a basketball player, the money, and even the admiration of movie stars were temptations that could easily lure him away from God's plan for his life. Other temptations soon followed as teammates and opponents alike tested him to see if his faith was real.

What helped to keep him "stayed on Jesus"? Making choices early on. He set up rules: no profanity, no put-downs, especially in "trash talk." Another rule involved staying in prayer.

After making the last basket to seal the Lakers' NBA finals

championship in 1988, Green was asked if that was the greatest moment of his life. Instead he replied, "Getting saved was."

After losing the championship to the Bulls in 1991, Green went on to play with the Phoenix Suns and the Dallas Mavericks.

Green consistently proved that he could be a champion on or off the court. In 1989 he founded the AC Green Foundation for Youth, which sponsors a summer youth camp. He also founded Athletes for Absstinence.

- What hard decisions did A.C. Green make before he was drafted by the NBA?
- Why were these decisions so important later in his career?
- What does it mean to you to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?
- How does that fit in your life?

finish the **STORY** of a middle-school girl

It was the day of her graduation from middle school, and Arabella Jackson felt a surge of excitement. As an honor student and a commencement speaker, Arabella would be seated on the platform beside the school principals and other honor students.

So many thoughts went through Arabella's mind all at once—thoughts of the honor and excitement of the moment and the promise of a bright and successful future.

Then everything went wrong. She heard a commotion and two girls came over to where she and her friends were standing.

"There's a drunk man over there!" one of the girls laughed. "Shh!" answered Arabella's friend. "That man is Arabella's father!"

At that moment Arabella's graduation began, and she felt totally humiliated and ashamed. She walked forward and took her seat on the platform. The man making the commotion was her father. Being seated in a place of honor gave Arabella the opportunity to watch her drunken father disrupt those around him throughout the entire ceremony.

But she also took the time to think about what was happening. Her

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AN IMPOSSIBLE REQUEST



Have you ever waited and waited for something to happen and it seemed like it would never occur? Then finally, it's a reality! But just when everything seems wonderful, someone comes along and asks you to give it all up? You go from the heights to the very pits!

Abraham may have felt a lot like that. God had promised Abraham that his descendants would form a great nation—even though Abraham had no children. After many years of waiting, Abraham and Sarah finally became the parents of a son, Isaac. What joy they must have felt as they watched Isaac grow and develop! He was the beginning of the great nation that God had promised.

Now God came to Abraham with what must have seemed like an impossible request—offer Isaac as a sacrifice! Read today's text.

What does Genesis 22:3 tell you about Abraham's faith?

As you read Genesis 22:4-8, put yourself in Isaac's place. What are your thoughts and feelings?

GOD:

ABRAHAM:

ISAAC:

Genesis 22:9-12 gives the dramatic ending to this story. What can you learn about God, Abraham, and Isaac from these verses? James 2:21-22; Romans 4:3; and Hebrews 11:17-19 all speak of Abraham. How is the Hebrews passage different from the other two?

This story of Abraham and Isaac shows us that God wants our complete love and commitment to Him. Today's memory verse is Deuteronomy 6:5. What does it mean to you to love God with all your heart, soul, and strength?

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Genesis 22:1-12

¹Some time later God tested Abraham.

He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

²Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

³Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. "On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁴He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁵Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁶Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

⁹When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

¹²"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."

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father had begun drinking after he had been home for several months recovering from an accident. She knew that the people laughing at him didn't understand the pain and depression he was feeling, but she also felt humiliated by what he was doing. So much conflict was churning inside her.

"I had to make a choice that day," recalls Arabella. "I knew that God didn't want me to hate my father, yet part of me really wanted to."

• If you were Arabella, what choice would you make?

• What actions would this choice require?

• How might this choice affect Arabella's relationship with her father?

• How might this choice affect the rest of Arabella's life?

now read how the story **REALLY** ended...

"I made the choice to love and forgive my father that day, and even though it was hard, I introduced him to several of my teachers after the graduation. The choice I made that day was followed over the next few years by many other instances where I had to choose whether to go my way or God's way. Today, I have a loving marriage, and I don't harbor resentment against my father."

Arabella made the decision not to let other people's problems, even the problems of those closest to her, hinder her own walk with God. That took guts.

What are you asked to do? That's simple. Love God. But it's not so simple. Use these exercises to think about how you can show your love to God in practical ways.

1. As you climb your mountain of obedience to God, what are you carrying that He has asked you to sacrifice?

Now draw what you look like as you climb down the other side.

2. Use doodles and colors to show how you feel about God this morning.

3. Draw some of the things that try to pull you away from loving God.

Finish your picture to show how God keeps on loving you.

4. Draw this verse: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."
Deuteronomy 6:5

Love!

God

every day devos

GIVE
IT ALL
YOU'VE GOT!

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
Deuteronomy 6:5

"Give it all you've got!" are instructions you hear from coaches trying to fire up their teams. God has some instructions for us, too. They are found in today's memory verse.

MONDAY In Matthew 22:37, Jesus repeats God's instructions. Pray for God's help as you give it all you've got this week.

TUESDAY Loving God with your whole heart means that He is number 1 in your life. Rank the important people and things in your life. Where does God fit in with you?

WEDNESDAY What does it mean to love God "with all your soul"? Describe how such a person would act. Can you name someone who shows that they love God in such a way?

THURSDAY How does it feel to know that someone truly loves you? Think of ways that you can love God with all your strength.

FRIDAY Read 2 Kings 23:25. How can this verse be an encouragement to you?

SATURDAY Ask God to help you to love Him with all your heart, soul, and strength every day. What differences may your family and friends notice about your behavior?

