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Abraham and Isaac

Key Themes

- God demands obedience and trust.
- God provides salvation through Jesus.

Key Passages

- Genesis 22:1–19; John 1:29–34; Hebrews 11:17–19

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how Abraham demonstrated his faith and trust in God.
- Compare the sacrifice of Isaac and the ram to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.
- Trace the promise of the Messiah through history.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “How does Isaac represent Jesus Christ?”

- Print one Scripture Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM and cut out the strips.
- Review the passages from the Scripture Strips.



Studying God’s Word

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God called Abraham to offer Isaac, the son of promise, as a sacrifice. Abraham acted in faith, obeyed God, and continued to trust His promise. In the end, God provided a ram in Isaac’s place. We see in this account a foreshadowing of Christ and the salvation God promises through Him.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.



Activity: From the Seed to the Lamb

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Students will trace the promise of the Messiah from the vague references to “the Seed” to the arrival of Jesus Christ the Messiah to the eternal reign of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

- Print one From the Seed to the Lamb worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare your heart and mind for this week's lesson, read Genesis 22:1–18; Hebrews 11:17–19.

“And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken” (Genesis 21:1). With this, God kept His promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah and fulfilled the covenant and promise previously made to Abraham (Genesis 17:7). This was the child of promise. It was through his seed that the line of the Messiah would come.

Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5). And he celebrated the birth of this long-awaited son (Genesis 21:8). But this celebration would quickly turn somber.

Genesis 22 records one of the most moving accounts in the Old Testament. For God now determined in His wisdom to test the faith of Abraham. Did Abraham truly believe the promises of God? Where did Abraham's allegiance lie? Was Abraham willing to trust and obey the one true God?

“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” (Genesis 22:2). How heartbreaking this must have been. Yet Abraham, demonstrating his complete confidence in God, saddled his donkey, took his son, his servants, and the wood for the burnt offering, and began his journey (Genesis 22:3).

The faith and obedience shown by Abraham is seldom seen more vividly. He demonstrated it when he spoke to his servants, “the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and come back to you” (Genesis 22:5). This statement—that they would come back—revealed that Abraham believed God would keep His word and if necessary, bring his son back to life (Hebrews 11:17–19). Again he exhibited amazing faith when, as the trip neared its conclusion, Isaac wondered to his father, “where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7). “God will provide for Himself the lamb” (Genesis 22:8). Abraham was fully prepared to obey and offer his son, but it also appears that somehow he knew the principle of substitutionary sacrifice—and that is where his hope was. Perhaps he had heard the record of Adam's sin and how God covered their nakedness and shame with the skins of the dead animals in the garden.

On the mountaintop the moment came: Isaac on the altar built by his own father; Abraham with hand stretched out to present to God the ultimate act of obedience (the death of this precious son promised so long ago) (Genesis 22:9–10); then the Angel of the Lord calling, “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 22:12). Abraham had passed the test. His trust was absolute; his obedience complete. And God provided a ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:13). Here the Angel of the Lord confirmed again the Abrahamic Covenant—the land, the descendants, and the blessings that would be fulfilled through Abraham (Genesis 22:15–18).

How blessed we are to see in this historical account a clear foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice, provided by God Himself, Jesus Christ, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). “The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)! He alone is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing (Revelation 5:12)! He is the only one able to offer hope and forgiveness for eternity to all who will sincerely repent of their sins and turn to Him in total trust and obedience.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

As we consider the amazing display of obedience in Abraham and the merciful intervention of our holy God, we also see God's omniscience and sovereignty as He weaves His plan of redemption in Jesus Christ throughout all of Scripture. This account of Abraham and Isaac is just one such example.

When God called Abraham to Mount Moriah, He knew exactly what would occur in this sacred place in the future. Years later, in this same region, God would appear to David and stop the plague that would beset Israel in retribution for David's disobedience against God (1 Chronicles 21:14–15). Later, near this mountain, David's son Solomon would build the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 3:1) where the Most Holy Place would allow limited access by the High Priest—once a year—into God's presence (Leviticus 16:2). And then, in the culmination of God's eternal plan, Jesus Christ Himself would be offered near this

place as the perfect sacrifice and final atonement for the sins of everyone who would believe.

The significance of this demands reverence to our all-knowing God. For on this mountain, where God provided a ram for Isaac as his sacrifice—God also provided the only Lamb whose blood is able to ransom a people to God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Revelation 5:9).

On that fateful day, the day of Christ's death, the temple curtain that separated the people from their God was torn. The barrier between God and man had been removed forever. No longer would access to our holy God be limited. But believers can now enter boldly into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus our High Priest. We can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, knowing our hearts and bodies are washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:19–22).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We know that the actual Abrahamic Covenant included Abraham leaving his family and his home and journeying to a place the Lord would show him. God also promised a great nation, a great name, and many blessings (Genesis 12:1–2). The culmination of this covenant would be the birth of Jesus Christ—a descendant of Abraham—the one through whom all nations would be blessed (Genesis 18:18).

However, this covenant was foreshadowed at the very beginning—in the Garden of Eden. Even as God was pronouncing the curse, He was also offering the hope of victory over death and sin. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15). Below is a brief glimpse of the history of this amazing covenant:

Genesis 3:15 God promised a Redeemer in the Garden of Eden

Genesis 12:1–3 God presented His covenant to Abram

Genesis 12:4–5 Abram and his family began their journey

Genesis 17:1–27 God changed Abram's name to Abraham and promised him a son

Genesis 26:3–5 God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Abraham's son—Isaac

Genesis 28:13–15 God confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac's descendant—Jacob

Genesis 45:7–8 God preserved the people of Israel and led them to Egypt through Jacob's descendant—Joseph

Genesis 49:10 The Messiah was promised through another of Jacob's descendants—Judah

1 Chronicles 2:1–15 King David descended from the tribe of Judah

2 Samuel 7:1–17 The Davidic Covenant was established—the line of David would rule forever

Luke 1:31–33 Jesus will receive the throne of David and will reign over the house of Jacob forever

Do you see God's faithfulness . . . His omniscience . . . His mercy . . . His grace . . . His sovereignty through this historical account encompassing thousands of years and woven perfectly throughout the history of the world? We serve an awesome God. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to whom be glory forever (Romans 11:36)!

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Dear God, how I long to one day have the faith exhibited by Abraham. Help me to trust you in every circumstance—knowing that you have always been faithful, and you always will be. And thank you, dear Lord, for the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world—Jesus Christ. I pray that the students will one day see the wonder of your Word and claim the hope that comes from understanding and believing that through this Lamb, they can inherit eternal life.

Review

In the last lesson we saw God's justice and mercy demonstrated in the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham knew God's character and pleaded with Him to spare the cities for the sake of the righteous—but not even 10 righteous people were found in Sodom.

God showed His mercy toward Lot and his family as the angels led them out of the city. God showed His justice in destroying the people of the cities for their wickedness.

Because God is a just Judge (Psalm 7:11), He must punish sin. Yet, in His mercy, He has provided Jesus to act as a substitute to take the penalty for sin on the behalf of those who place their faith in Him. God has spared His children from sin's penalty through the promised Savior who came through Abraham.

Today, we are going to continue to examine God's faithfulness to fulfill the promises made to Abraham as Isaac, the son of promise, enters the plot.



➤ Write on the board, "How does Isaac represent Jesus Christ?"

➤ Pass out the Scripture Strips as students arrive and ask each person to mark that spot in the Bible and be prepared to read it later in the lesson.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

As God had promised, Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham. The events are recorded in Genesis 21. In this chapter we also learn more about the continuing tensions between Hagar and Sarah as Sarah asked for Hagar and Ishmael to be kicked out of the household. Abraham expelled the two of them at the command of God. As God had promised earlier, Ishmael went on to be married and became the father of many Arab tribes (Genesis 25:13–16).

As we pick up the reading, Isaac was now about 25 years old and was living with Abraham and Sarah at Beersheba.

Let's read Genesis 22:1–19 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

? **When did this event occur?** *About 1871 BC. Refer to the Seven C's Timeline to establish the historical context.*

Genesis 22:1–19

? **What did God ask Abraham to do?** *Abraham was told to offer Isaac as a sacrifice on a mountain in the land of Moriah.*

Do you understand what that means, to “offer” him? *Allow answers.*

It means Abraham was to put his son on the altar, kill him, and burn him.

? **What was the purpose of God’s command?** *To test Abraham.*

? **When did Abraham act on God’s command?** *Early the next morning.*

? **Who travelled with Abraham?** *Isaac and two servants.*

? **How long did the journey take?** *Three days.*

? **As they arrived in Moriah, what did Abraham tell the servants?** *Abraham told them to stay with the donkey.*

Who did Abraham say was coming back? *He and Isaac.*

That’s interesting, isn’t it? Abraham anticipated their safe return—both he and Isaac. Yet we’ll see that he continued with the preparations to sacrifice Isaac.

? **What was taken to the sacrifice?** *Abraham took fire, and Isaac carried the wood they had split.*

What did Isaac ask his dad? **Genesis 22:7.** *Where is the lamb for the offering?*

? **In response to Isaac, how did Abraham express his faith in God’s promise?** *Abraham assured Isaac that God would provide a lamb.*

Abraham was trusting that God would provide the sacrifice. Abraham had great faith, didn’t he? They walked up the mountain to offer a sacrifice as Abraham had done many times before. This time things were different. God was testing Abraham to see if he would obey even to the point of sacrificing his cherished son.

? **At what point did God intervene in the act of sacrificing?** *Isaac had been bound and placed on the altar. As Abraham was stretching out the knife to kill his son, the Angel of the Lord spoke and stopped him.*

? **Now what did God say to Abraham?** **Genesis 22:12.** *Now I know that you fear God.*

? **What did God mean when He said that?** *Allow students to answer.*

Abraham had passed the test. When God said He knew Abraham feared Him, He meant that He knew that Abraham would obey Him no matter what. Abraham showed that God was more important to him than his son, Isaac.

? **How did God provide a replacement for the sacrifice?** *A ram, caught by its horns in the bushes, was offered in Isaac’s place.*

? **What’s a ram?** *A ram is a male sheep.*

- ? **How did Abraham name the place of the sacrifice?** *He called it "The Lord Will Provide" (Jehovah-jireh).*
- ? **What phrase is repeated three times (verses 2, 12, and 16)?** *God recognized that Isaac was Abraham's only son.*
- ? **What is the main point of the passage?** *God tested Abraham's faith by calling him to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham was obedient to God, trusting in His promises.*
- ? **What does the passage tell us about God?** *He gives us commands to test our faith and obedience.*

Discover the Truth

God reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham after this test, Abraham having demonstrated his faith in God by his obedience. As is often the case, a passage from the New Testament gives us more insight into this episode.

Turn to Hebrews 11 and listen as I read verses 17–19. *Read the passage.*

- ? **What additional information does this passage give us about Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac—the son of promise?** *Abraham knew that God would fulfill His promise to make a great nation from Isaac, so Abraham concluded that God could raise him from the dead after he had been sacrificed.*

Abraham had such faith in God's faithfulness to His promises that he was obedient to the command that would have seemed to bring an end to the promises God had made. But God is not going to ask us to do something that runs contrary to His plans—Abraham knew this to be true by his faith and by experiencing God's faithfulness in the past. That is the kind of faith that we should all seek to have—fully assured of God's promises.



Hebrews 11:17–19

FAITHFUL

(Refer to Attributes poster.)



From the Seed to the Lamb

MATERIALS

- From the Seed to the Lamb worksheet for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the worksheets.

Once again, God had confirmed His promise for the seed of Abraham to inherit the land of Canaan, to produce a great multitude of offspring, and to bless all nations. As we saw in Galatians 3 a few weeks ago, that blessing was ultimately fulfilled in the work of Christ on the Cross. Peter also used this passage to explain the blessings of Christ as he preached a sermon recorded in Acts 3.

Use the information on this worksheet to trace the promise from the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3 to the arrival of the baby Jesus and on to the Lamb on the throne in the book of Revelation.

At each of the references, write the next reference in the margin with some sort of

symbol or word that will remind you of the meaning of this reference. This will create a thread through your Bible connecting the promise of the Messiah through the ages of history, and even into the future.

If you are short on time, allow the students to work for a short time and then encourage them to finish the activity on their own.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Understanding how the events of the Bible are related to one another is an important part of Bible study. That is why we have been using the Seven C's of History timeline to help frame our study through the Bible. I trust that as you continue to study Scripture, you will find more connections and add them to this short list.

I also hope that it is very obvious that God's faithfulness is evident throughout the Bible. The gospel message of the need for a Savior to remove the curse of sin is not something that is limited to the New Testament—it is present through the entirety of the Bible.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we recap our lesson for today, we are also going to make some more connections between the account of Abraham and Isaac and the Messiah that came from Isaac's descendants.

Earlier, I passed out some strips of paper with titles and Scripture passages on them. As I review the idea from Genesis, each of you please read the passage on the strip and then we will draw connections between the

sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of Jesus. *The titles and passages from the Scripture Strips are in parentheses below.*

Matthew 1:19–23

God had promised Abraham that his son, whom God had given the name Isaac, would be the son of promise through whom the promise of a land and a people would be fulfilled (Son of promise—Matthew 1:19–23). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

- ? **How did the angel's announcement to Joseph reflect Abraham's experience?** *Joseph was given the name Jesus for his promised son, and Jesus would bless His people by removing their sins.*

John 3:16–18

We saw that God affirmed Isaac was Abraham's only son three times in Genesis 22 (Only begotten Son—John 3:16–18). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

In both passages, and also in the Hebrews 11 passage we read earlier, there is the recognition of a unique son given through a promise. *Ishmael had been removed from the family and was not the son God had promised to Abraham.*

John 19:17–18

As Abraham and Isaac prepared for the sacrifice, Isaac carried the wood up the hill to where the altar was built (Carried the wood of His sacrifice—John 19:17–18). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

- ? **What parallel do we see with the offering of Jesus on the Cross?** *Jesus also had to carry the wooden cross to the hill where He was crucified.*

Ephesians 5:1–2

Isaac, the son of promise, was to be offered as a sacrifice before the Lord, and the text does not mention Isaac struggling or refusing to obey God (Offered as a sacrifice—Ephesians 5:1–2). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

Christ's willing sacrifice is also an offering before the Lord, the sweet-smelling aroma rising up to God just as the smoke of burnt offerings had before.

Isaiah 53:10

Abraham, the father of Isaac, was to offer his own son as a burnt offering before the Lord (The Father offers the sacrifice—Isaiah 53:10). *Ask the person with this verse to read it.*

We see from that passage that it pleased God the Father to bruise the Son as Jesus bore the penalty for our sins in His body on the Cross.

John 1:29–34

As Abraham demonstrated his faith through his obedience, God stopped the sacrifice of Isaac and provided a substitute—a ram—to be offered instead of Isaac (A ram sacrifice—John 1:29–34). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

- ? **How did John the Baptist describe Jesus?** *As the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus was offered in our place just as the ram replaced Isaac.*

Isaac was as close to death as he could have come. The Hebrews 11 passage also explains that Isaac was dead “in a figurative sense” (A return from death—1 Corinthians 15:3–4). *Ask the person with this passage to read it.*

Jesus was literally dead in the tomb after He had been offered as a sacrifice, but He did not stay there. On the third day, He rose to life, showing His victory over death.

God had instructed Abraham to travel from Beersheba to the land of Moriah about 40 miles away. God brought Abraham to a specific mountain where the altar was built (Mount Moriah—2 Chronicles 3:1).

Ask the person with this verse to read it.

- ? **What connection is there to the death of Jesus?** *Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem near the Temple. Solomon’s Temple had been built on Mount Moriah in the city that had formerly been called Salem in the land of Moriah.*

It is very likely that the place where Isaac was offered is very close to where Christ was crucified. The amazing parallels that we have just seen are another reminder of the awesome sovereignty of God over history. We have the privilege of holding all of this revelation from God in our hands and studying it to understand His wonderful plan and promises to us. That is a privilege we should be sure to thank Him for.

SOVEREIGN

(Refer to Attributes poster.)

GOD’S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

I hope you are impressed by the way we have seen God’s providence in the last several lessons. We have done a very brief study of Abraham, but I trust you can see God’s character shining through these accounts.

- ? **What can you take from today’s lesson to help you be assured of God’s faithfulness to His promises?** *Discuss various answers.*
- ? **What benefit do you see in tracing the promise of a Savior, as we did in the cross-referencing activity, throughout the entire Bible?** *It should confirm our trust in God’s sovereign control over all of history. We can expect Him to be faithful to the future promises of the consummation of this corrupted creation under the rule of Christ.*
- ? **Some of you may have been asking yourselves if you could have been as faithful as Abraham in his situation. If you are ever in doubt of your ability, how can you find assurance that your faith will carry you through?** *It is by fixing our minds on the promises of God, not our own abilities, that we can demonstrate our faith. Abraham constantly looked to God’s promises, not his own ability or courage.*
- ? **How might you use the parallels between the sacrifice of Isaac and the Crucifixion to share the gospel with someone you know?** *This would be an intriguing way to show how God has worked in history. Most people are probably familiar with the account, so it would be a great way to start a conversation that is intent upon presenting the amazing hope we have in Christ.*





MEMORY VERSE

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Offer God praise for His faithfulness to provide a sacrifice for the sins of mankind.
- Ask God to help the students know Him so well through studying His Word that they would be able to exercise complete obedience through faith.