

LET'S TALK SCRIPTURE

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# TRUSTING THE PROMISER

*A Concise Bible Study Lesson on Genesis 22*

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SERIES

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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*"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him." — Proverbs 30:5*

<b>Lesson Introduction and Historical Context</b>	<b>3</b>
.....	
<b>The Sovereign Test and the Command to Moriah</b>	<b>4</b>
.....	
<b>The Journey of Resurrection Faith</b>	<b>5</b>
.....	
<b>The Akedah and the Substitutionary Sacrifice</b>	<b>6</b>
.....	
<b>The Oath Confirmed and the Messianic Seed</b>	<b>7</b>
.....	
<b>Personal Reflection and Discussion Questions</b>	<b>8</b>
.....	

## LESSON INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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The account of Abraham offering his son Isaac in Genesis 22 represents the pinnacle of the patriarch's spiritual walk. To understand the gravity of this event, it must be viewed in its correct chronological order. The chapter opens with the phrase, "Now it came about after these things." This structural bridge forces the reader to look backward at the massive challenges resolved in chapter 21.

In that previous season, Abraham faced a double crisis. First, he was commanded to cast out his firstborn physical son, Ishmael, to secure the messianic inheritance for Isaac. This demand was deeply distressing to Abraham's fatherly heart, requiring explicit divine intervention to bring his thoughts into perfect alignment with Sarah's words. Second, Abraham experienced a significant lapse of faith in his interactions with Abimelech, the king of Gerar, proving that his trust in God's protective shield was still incomplete and maturing.

These two realities—the emotional space left by the departure of Ishmael and the remaining indicators of an unrefined faith—converge directly at the opening of chapter 22. God does not leave His covenant partner in a state of partial sanctification. The stage is sovereignly set for a monumental test designed to prove that Abraham loves the Promiser more than the ultimate gift of the Promise itself.

### FOCUS TEXT NOTE

As this lesson unfolds, observe how the narrative shifts from a painful historical failure to the most brilliant manifestation of human obedience and Christological mapping recorded in the Old Testament.

## THE SOVEREIGN TEST AND THE COMMAND TO MORIAH

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In Genesis 22:1, the narrator discloses a vital detail that remains hidden from Abraham: "God tested Abraham." The Hebrew verb utilized here is *nissah*, which means to prove, refine, or demonstrate the structural integrity of an object under intense pressure. This stands in complete contrast to a temptation to evil. God never entices humans to sin; rather, He orchestrates historical crises to bring the hidden realities of faith to the surface of human experience.

When the divine voice calls out to him, Abraham responds instantly with "Here I am" (Hebrew: *Hineni*). This specialized response marks a posture of alert readiness, total availability, and unconditional submission. God then delivers a mandate engineered to peel back the layers of Abraham's soul: "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering."

The rhetorical crescendo of specific identifiers—"your son," "your only son," "whom you love," "Isaac"—highlights the immense emotional weight of the demand. Isaac was the unique, irreplaceable child of the covenant through whom God had promised a vast multitude of descendants. Because Isaac had not yet fathered a single child, the divine command to offer him as an *olah* (a total burnt offering consumed by fire) introduced a staggering paradox. To execute Isaac was, from a human standpoint, to invalidate the promises of God.

The destination is equally significant: the mountains of Moriah. Scriptural cross-references, such as 2 Chronicles 3:1, establish that this location is identical to the site where Solomon would construct the Temple in Jerusalem. Ultimately, this stands as the exact geographical canvas outside the city walls where Jesus Christ would be crucified. God was leading Abraham into a deep geographical preview of the plan of redemption.

## THE JOURNEY OF RESURRECTION FAITH

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The narrative records no verbal argument or protest from Abraham. Instead, he demonstrates immediate, silent resolve. Rising early in the morning, he personally tackles the administrative preparations—saddling his donkey, choosing domestic servants, and splitting the sacrificial wood. This methodical approach emphasizes that his compliance was intentional, not an impulsive emotional reaction.

The text notes that the journey to Moriah consumed a full three days. This chronological detail is highly significant. It proves that Abraham's obedience was not sustained by a temporary surge of religious adrenaline. For three consecutive days, in the heavy silence of the desert march, he had ample opportunity to allow doubt or paternal grief to turn him back. Every step forward was a conscious renewal of his allegiance to the sovereign Lord.

Upon identifying the mountain, Abraham issues a critical command to his young men: "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." The grammar of this sentence contains an extraordinary theological key. The verbs "worship" and "return" are both constructed in the first-person plural form. Abraham does not say, "I will go, offer the boy, and I will return alone." He explicitly declares, "We will return to you."

### THEOLOGY OF RESURRECTION

As clarified by the inspired commentary in Hebrews 11:17–19, Abraham had reasoned that God was entirely faithful to His covenant word. Because God had stated that his seed would continue specifically through Isaac, and because God had commanded that Isaac be slaughtered, Abraham logically concluded that God would resurrect Isaac from the dead on that mountain to preserve the integrity of His promise. He believed that the same omnipotent power that brought biological life to the dead womb of Sarah could restore physical breath to a body turned to ashes.

## THE AKEDAH AND THE SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE

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The staging of the final ascent is rich with redemptive imagery. Abraham places the heavy wood of the burnt offering directly onto the shoulders of his son Isaac, while he personally carries the fire and the knife. This structural framing forces the student of Scripture to look forward to the New Testament, where God the Father places the wooden cross upon the shoulders of His only begotten Son on the path to Calvary.

The heavy silence is broken by Isaac's perceptive inquiry: "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham's response stands as one of the greatest prophetic statements in the Old Testament: "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." The phrase indicates that the provision of a satisfactory victim is an exclusive, sovereign prerogative of God. Man cannot manufacture a sufficient offering to satisfy divine justice; God must provide the necessary sacrifice from His own resources.

Arriving at the summit, Abraham builds the altar, arranges the wood, and executes the *\*Akedah\**—the binding of Isaac. At this historical juncture, Abraham is an old man, and Isaac is a robust young man who could have easily resisted or overpowered his father. Yet, the text records absolutely no struggle or protest. Isaac willingly extends his limbs to the cords, voluntarily submitting his body to the altar. In this act of compliance, Isaac mirrors the submissive posture of Jesus Christ, who willingly laid down His life of His own accord.

As the knife is raised to strike the fatal blow, the Angel of the Lord calls from heaven, halting the execution: "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad... for now I know that you fear God." This address comes from a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (a theophany), who steps in to stop the knife that He will ultimately receive Himself on Calvary. Following the restraint, Abraham discovers a ram caught in the thicket by its horns and offers it up as a burnt offering "in the place of his son." This is the clean, unmixed definition of vicarious substitution. The innocent animal dies as a direct replacement for the child of promise. To memorialize this encounter, Abraham names the site ***Yahweh-Yireh***, meaning "The Lord Will Provide," establishing the proverbial witness that on the Mount of the Lord, our absolute spiritual bankruptcy will be answered by divine provision.

## THE OATH CONFIRMED AND THE MESSIANIC SEED

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The Angel of the Lord calls to Abraham a second time to deliver the final, formal confirmation of the covenant: "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord... because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son... in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." When God swears an oath "by Myself," He invokes the highest possible standard of truth in the universe, binding His very character and existence to the fulfillment of these promises.

To properly interpret the promise of the seed, one must recognize its dual structure. It operates both collectively and individually:

1. **The Collective Dimension:** God refers to a vast, multi-generational corporate seed that will be as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore—encompassing both a spiritual community of faith and the physical nation of Israel.
2. **The Individual Dimension:** As the Apostle Paul demonstrates in Galatians 3:16, the text uses the singular noun *zera* (seed) to point directly to a single, specific descendant: "He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your seed,' who is Christ." All the global, saving blessings intended for gentile nations flow through this single messianic source. Jesus is the ultimate Seed of Abraham who conquers the gates of the enemy, distributing the riches of the covenant to the entire world.

The chapter concludes with a sudden shift into a domestic genealogy highlighting the family line of Abraham's brother, Nahor, and specifically introducing the birth of Rebecca (verse 23). In the architecture of Genesis, this list of names is structurally necessary to transition the narrative focus from Abraham to Isaac. To continue the line of the promise and produce the corporate seed, Isaac must have a suitable bride. The text isolates Rebecca to show that while Abraham was ascending the mountain, God was silently and sovereignly preparing the future path for messianic succession.

## PERSONAL REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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*Ponder these questions deeply or use them in a small group setting to apply the truths of Genesis 22 to your personal walk with God.*

1. **The Purpose of Proving:** How does distinguishing between a malicious temptation to sin and a sovereign divine test (*nissah*) change the way you view unexpected periods of intense spiritual pressure or emotional suffering in your life?
2. **Vindicating Faith:** Abraham was legally declared righteous by faith alone in Genesis 15:6, yet his faith was historically vindicated by his works in Genesis 22. Why is it vital for a believer to understand that true, saving faith must always manifest itself through visible, unhesitating obedience?
3. **Surrendering the Promise:** Abraham was asked to surrender Isaac—the very object through whom God’s promises were to be fulfilled. Are there instances where you are tempted to trust in the blessings or the specific "promises" of God more than you trust in the character of the Promiser Himself?
4. **The Silent Submission:** Reflect on Isaac's voluntary willingness to be bound and placed upon the wood of the altar without resisting. How does his submissive posture challenge your own willingness to surrender your rights, physical strength, and personal future to the sovereign will of the Father?
5. **Resting in Yahweh-Yireh:** The name *Yahweh-Yireh* reminds us that God sees our ultimate spiritual bankruptcy and provides the perfect substitute in Christ. How should this truth protect your heart from falling into legalism, self-reliance, or the fear of condemnation?