

March 4
Lesson 1 (NIV)

THE LORD

WILL PROVIDE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Genesis 22

GENESIS 22:1-3, 6-14

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

² Then 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.”

³ Early 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.

⁶ Abraham 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, ⁷ Isaac 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?”

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

⁹ When 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. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But 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.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

KEY VERSE

Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.—Genesis 22:8

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the events surrounding Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac.
2. Explain the implications for Abraham of obeying God’s command to sacrifice Isaac.
3. Write a prayer of trust in God’s continued provision.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. God Will Fight for Us
- B. Lesson Background

I. God Tests Abraham (GENESIS 22:1-3)

- A. God’s Request (vv. 1, 2)
The Value of Testing

B. Abraham's Response (v. 3)

II. Abraham Trusts God (GENESIS 22:6-10)

A. Isaac's Question (vv. 6, 7)

B. Abraham's Answer (v. 8)

C. Abraham's Action (vv. 9, 10)

III. God Spares Isaac (GENESIS 22:11-14)

A. Angel's Announcement (vv. 11, 12)

Where Are You?

B. Abraham's Acknowledgment (vv. 13, 14)

Conclusion

A. God Still Fights for Us

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. God Will Fight for Us

Most people don't know what to make of the wars of the Old Testament. People frequently ask me how God's people can go from killing tens of thousands of people in the Old Testament to loving and evangelizing all people in the New Testament. Part of my response is to remind people that God does more of the fighting in the Old Testament than do his people.

Lately, however, I am beginning to hear a common response to that statement. People often reply, "I am sure that the Israelites believed that God was fighting for them, but all ancient peoples believed that. Why should we think that God's people were any different?" This is a great question, and the Bible has a great answer.

What other nation had no standing army? What other nation spurned strategic military alliances? What other nation refused to acquire the latest military technology from Egypt (chariots and horses)? The Israelites took none of these items into battle when they took possession of the promised land under the leadership of Joshua.

It is one thing for a nation to claim that God fights for them, but quite another to make zero provisions for national security. It is true that many ancient nations claimed that their gods fought for them. But only Israel dared to march around an enemy city multiple times, blow trumpets, shout loudly, and wait for the walls to collapse.

It is one thing to say that we trust God, but another thing to place our own future completely in God's hands. In today's passage, Abraham is given an opportunity to do this. Because he rose to the occasion, he is a model of faith for us all.

B. Lesson Background

While the Scriptures recognize Abraham as a man of faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:16-22; Galatians 3:6-9; Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19), his was by no means a perfect faith. He demonstrated great faith in leaving his home in Ur (Genesis 12:1-4). But by the end of the same chapter, he was telling his wife, Sarah, to lie and say she was his sister in order to save his own skin (12:10-20).

Later when Sarah failed to conceive, Abraham impregnated her maidservant Hagar rather than seek the Lord's will. This created serious tension in Abraham's household (Genesis 16:1-6). After God made clear that Sarah would give him a son, Abraham handed her over to a pagan king (20:1-18), failing once again to trust God.

Despite all this, God remained faithful to Abraham and Sarah. He delivered them from several powerful kings. He watched over the circumstances involving Lot, Hagar, and Ishmael (Hagar's son). And God provided the son of promise for whom Abraham and Sarah had been waiting: Isaac.

Still, by the time we get to Genesis 22, we are left wondering whether God would grow impatient. Abraham was a man of spiritual highs and lows. His faith was strong, but inconsistent. The reader is left wondering who the real Abraham is. Perhaps Abraham was wondering the same thing. Was he still the man of great faith who left Ur behind to go to an unknown land? Or had years of wandering taken their toll on his faith?

I. God Tests Abraham

(GENESIS 22:1-3)

A. God's Request (vv. 1, 2)

¹ **Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"**

"Here I am," he replied.

The Hebrew underneath the word *tested* is translated similarly elsewhere (examples Exodus 16:4; 20:20). The idea is that of proving the worth of something by testing. Hebrews 11:17 supports this in saying that God "tested" Abraham. We can be sure that God is testing Abraham for the man's own good.

This verse also introduces a phrase found twice in this chapter: *Here I am*. Though the phrase itself is not extraordinary, its repetition draws special attention to two crucial moments when Abraham responds to being addressed. The other reference is in Genesis 22:11.

What Do You Think?

In what ways does God test a believer's obedience today?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Regarding tests involving other believers

Regarding tests involving unbelievers

Regarding tests known only to God and the one being tested

Other

2a. Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah.

God’s request of Abraham is startling in at least three ways. First, it is odd that God identifies *Isaac* as Abraham’s *only son*. We know that Abraham’s firstborn son is actually Ishmael. The fact that he has been born of Sarah’s servant does not make him any less the son of Abraham. Centuries later, 4 of Jacob’s 12 sons—who became the 12 tribes of Israel—will be born to the servants of Jacob’s wives ([Genesis 35:25, 26](#)).

The explanation for this curiosity lies in [Genesis 21](#). There we see that conflict within the family results in Abraham’s sending Hagar and Ishmael away. Though God continues to look after Ishmael as he grows up ([21:20](#)), he is no longer Abraham’s responsibility. Furthermore, Isaac is the “only son” in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham ([21:12, 13](#); [Galatians 4:23](#)).

Moriah is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible only in [2 Chronicles 3:1](#). That passage informs us that many centuries later Israel’s King Solomon would build the temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem.

2b. “Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

Second, it is odd that God asks Abraham to perform child sacrifice. Not only does this violate all modern sensibilities, but God makes clear throughout the Old Testament that he vehemently opposes this practice ([Leviticus 18:21](#); [20:2-5](#); [2 Kings 16:2, 3](#); [Jeremiah 32:35](#)).

From Abraham’s perspective, however, the practice in and of itself may not seem so odd. Some of the false gods of his time are worshipped this way. In addition, Abraham does not know as much about God as we do, having all of Scripture at our disposal. We should remember that the giving of the law through Moses, which will prohibit child sacrifice, won’t happen for five centuries or so.

This leads to the third startling aspect of this passage: that God asks Abraham to sacrifice the child of the promise. This is undoubtedly what Abraham finds most disturbing. His whole relationship with God is built around the promise that God will make him into a great nation with countless descendants ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). For a barren woman well past the years of childbearing to have borne a son has already been a great miracle. Now God is asking Abraham to kill this special son! Abraham is not only giving up someone he loves, he is also cutting off the only way he sees possible to beget offspring.

What Do You Think?

In what ways have you grown spiritually from occasions when you realized that obedience to God would derail your expectations? Why?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- On occasions when you obeyed anyway
- On occasions when you disobeyed

THE VALUE OF TESTING

In 1921, traffic fatalities in the United States occurred at the rate of 24.09 deaths per million miles traveled. In 2014, the rate had dropped to 1.08 fatalities per million miles traveled. What made the difference? Stated simply: better cars.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration began doing crash tests in 1979. We’ve all seen those tests on TV or the Internet, with the cars crumpling under various types of impacts and the crash-test dummies flailing about. As car makers began responding to government regulations based on these tests, seat belts, air bags, and better car construction have resulted in drastic reductions in fatalities and serious injuries.

Abraham didn’t know whether he had enough faith to follow God’s leading until he was tested. That’s the purpose of testing: to discover strengths and weaknesses. Trust in God helps us build on the former and minimize the effects of the latter, even if we don’t understand at the moment why we are being tested. Should we look forward to testing or dread it?

—C. R. B.

B. Abraham’s Response (v. 3)

3 Early 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.

We are not told that Abraham says anything in response to God’s command. His actions speak for him as he rises *early* the next day to begin the trip. The three-day journey ([Genesis 22:4](#), not in today’s text) requires that *two of his servants* be brought along. Abraham probably needs their help for handling the logistics of food, clothing, bedding, and pack animals that are needed for the trip.

The place God had told him about is Moriah of the previous verse. Abraham has been directed to sacrifice his son in the same place where priests would later offer Israel’s legitimate sacrifices to God—as we know that King Solomon would later build the temple in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah (see [2 Chronicles 3:1](#), the only verse in the Old Testament in which Mount Zion is referred to as Mount Moriah). It is also very near to here where God would offer his only Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for sin.

II. Abraham Trusts God

([GENESIS 22:6-10](#))

A. Isaac’s Question (vv. 6, 7)

6 Abraham 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,

[Genesis 22:4, 5](#), not in today’s text, tell us that the four travelers have arrived at the destination. The parallel with Jesus is even stronger here: as Jesus will carry his own cross to Golgotha, Isaac is asked to carry *the wood* on which he is to be slain. Since Abraham has directed the two servants to remain some distance away ([Genesis 22:5](#)), they are not available to carry the wood.

This detail also tells us that Isaac is old enough to carry the required amount of wood. He is also old enough to understand that a burnt offering requires a lamb (see the next verse). Beyond that, the Scriptures do not provide further clues as to Isaac’s age. For Abraham himself to carry *the fire* likely means that he takes the necessary materials (perhaps some coals in a container) to ignite the fire for the burnt offering.

7. Isaac 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?”

At last we hear from Isaac, whose question is to be expected. He and his father have all the elements for a sacrificial offering except for the sacrificial animal itself.

The description of Isaac saying *to his father Abraham, “Father?”* may seem unnecessarily wordy at first glance. But the intent may be to highlight the drama in the father-son relationship and interaction. Using our “sanctified imaginations,” we might presume an attitude of excitement behind Isaac’s question *where is the lamb for the burnt offering?* as he presumes this to be a special father-son outing, maybe even a feast for just the two of them. On the flip side, we easily imagine a somber tone in Abraham’s address of Isaac as *my son*.

HOW TO SAY IT

Golgotha *Gahl-guh-thuh*.

Hagar *Hay-gar*.

Isaac *Eye-zuk*.

Ishmael *Ish-may-el*.

Israelites *Iz-ray-el-ites*.

Moriah *Mo-rye-uh*.

Ur *Er*.

History of the Temple

SITE OF TEMPLE	Abraham sent to Moriah to sacrifice Isaac	Gen
	David buys the site for the temple from Araunah (Ornan) at Moriah	2 Sa 1 Ch
FIRST TEMPLE	Temple built and dedicated by Solomon	1 Kir
	Temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar	2 Kir Jere
SECOND TEMPLE	Temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel	Ezra
	Temple remodeled by Herod the Great	John
	Temple destroyed by Romans	Matt
LIVING TEMPLE	Jesus' body	John
	The church	1 Co 2 Co
	Heavenly temple	Heb

Sheet 1—Spring 2018, *Adult Resources, Standard Lesson Quarterly*® Curriculum Photo © Thinkstock

Visual for Lesson 1. Keep this chart posted to help your learners hone their “temple alertness” across the lessons.

B. Abraham’s Answer (v. 8)

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

Does Abraham really believe that God *will provide the lamb for the burnt offering*? [Hebrews 11:19](#) offers helpful commentary in stating that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son because he believed that God could bring him back from the dead—“and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from the dead.” Previously, when telling his servants to stay behind, Abraham had added, “I and the boy [will] go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you” ([Genesis 22:5](#)). Abraham seems to expect God to intervene in some way on his son’s behalf.

C. Abraham’s Action (vv. 9, 10)

9. When 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.

The altar Abraham builds may be no more than a simple pile of rocks. *The wood* goes on top of the rocks, and the offering goes on top of the wood—it's that simple. For Abraham to bind *his son Isaac* may not be a simple matter, however, if the lad resists. But the text gives no indication that he does.

10. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

No spoken words are recorded, but it's easy to conjecture what is going through the minds of both father and son. The level of Isaac's terror is probably matched by the level of Abraham's anguish. Only God's intervention can stop things now.

What Do You Think?

What action steps can you take to grow your faith in terms of sacrificial boldness?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

Considering the example of someone you know

Considering the example of biblical characters

Considering your own personality traits

With regard to spiritual disciplines

Other

III. God Spares Isaac

(GENESIS 22:11-14)

A. Angel's Announcement (vv. 11, 12)

11. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

For the second time in this story, Abraham responds, *Here I am* when addressed. This is the climax of the story. Abraham is interrupted just as he is about to carry out the sacrifice commanded of him. The two-fold calling of *Abraham! Abraham!* carries a sense of urgency.

In [verse 1](#), God speaks to Abraham. But here *the angel of the Lord* speaks to him. It is possible that God was speaking through an angel in [verse 1](#) as well. Or perhaps in both verses, God takes the form of an angel in order to address Abraham rather than appoint a separate heavenly being to carry out his bidding.

The scene is similar to what later occurs at the burning bush with Moses. There the angel of the Lord appears to Moses "in flames of fire from within a bush" ([Exodus 3:2](#)), but then God is said to be the one who calls to Moses from the bush ([3:4](#)). It is clear that the angel represents divine authority.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 disappeared on March 8, 2014. The last voice contact came less than an hour after the jet took off. Radar showed the plane deviating from its flight plan soon afterward. Satellite tracking eventually revealed that the flight headed southwest over the Indian Ocean. Nearly a year and a half later, pieces of debris from the plane began to appear. As of this writing, though, the aircraft has yet to be found.

Flight 370's disappearance has led to various theories about the cause. Was it an act of terrorism? Did the pilot intentionally change the flight path and crash the plane into the ocean? The cockpit's failure to respond to a multitude of "Where are you?" requests may indicate the latter.

When God called to Abraham, that man declared his presence by saying, "Here I am." He had not deviated from where he was expected to be. Whether the situation involves family, friends, work, or our relationship with God, when we are called upon to be wholly present, the only satisfactory answer is "Here I am," when "here" is the appropriate place to be. It's a matter of integrity and responsibility. But ultimately, it's a matter of being accountable to those whom we love and who love us, especially God.

—C. R. B.

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."

These words tell us that Abraham has indeed passed the test that God has set before him. In essence, God has asked him, "Do you trust me and me alone to fulfill my promises to you? Are you willing to give up all control and place your entire future into my hands?" The answer to both questions is a resounding *yes!*

No other feat could demonstrate with such certainty Abraham's faith in God alone to fulfill his promise. Isaac is not merely his *only son*; Isaac is Abraham's only chance at securing his own future. In raising the knife, Abraham boldly declares his conviction that God is his only hope. With that unspoken confession of faith, he receives his son back, as though from the dead ([Hebrews 11:19](#)).

We should not misinterpret the phrase *I know that you fear God*. God is not glad that Abraham is afraid of him. Rather, fear is another way to express worship. Abraham understands that his son and thus his future belong to God. Abraham's obedience echoes David's later testimony of the Lord: "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him" ([Psalm 103:11](#)).

Clearly, God's will is the driving force in Abraham's life. God is his ultimate motivation. This is the heart of true worship. God values obedience over sacrifice ([1 Samuel 15:22](#)).

What Do You Think?

How should the lifestyle of one who fears God differ from that of one who does not?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

In terms of what others can perceive

In terms of what is known only between God and the God-fearer

B. Abraham's Acknowledgment (vv. 13, 14)

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.

To Abraham's delight, his own words then come to pass. God does indeed provide the animal to be sacrificed. The mention of Abraham looking up and seeing the *ram* is important, given what occurs in the following verse.

¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

Since God has faithfully provided for Abraham, the man names the location *The LORD Will Provide*. Abraham fully understands that the one true God always provides for his people. It is worth noting that Abraham does not name the place "Isaac is spared" or "A father is relieved." This whole account has been about God's faithfulness and whether Abraham truly believes that God will keep his promises. Indeed God is faithful, and Abraham truly believes.

What Do You Think?

How have you reacted on those occasions when God sent a "substitute provision" your way?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

When the substitute was a person

When the substitute was a tangible, material asset

Other

Conclusion

A. God Still Fights for Us

God kept his promise to Abraham and made him into a great nation. But that promise has now been superseded by the gospel of Jesus Christ. God no longer has to fight wars for his people to possess and protect a special promised territory. All territories are special to him.

Yet God's people are still in a real fight. Various powers, both human and supernatural, wage war against us. They tempt us to compromise our faith. They invite us to trust in our own strength. Like Abraham, we must trust God and God alone to provide for all our needs. We must live in light of his promises to us. We must go into battle equipped with his armor ([Ephesians 6:10-18](#)). Through him we will indeed triumph!

B. Prayer

Mighty God, we trust in your strength. Alone we are weak. Our best plans always seem to fail. Give us the courage to put our faith in you alone. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

God always provides, but not always
in ways we expect.

VISUALS FOR THESE LESSONS

The visual pictured in each lesson (example: page 237) is a small reproduction of a large, full-color poster included in the *Adult Resources* packet for the Spring Quarter. That packet also contains the very useful *Presentation Tools* CD for teacher use. Order No. 3628118 from your supplier.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV® Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV® Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Give each person two slips of paper and a pen. Have each student write an adjective on one slip of paper and a noun on the other. Ask students to fold their slips of paper and place them in separate piles of adjectives and nouns. When everyone is finished, ask a volunteer to pull a slip from each pile and say, "There is nothing in this world I love more than my [adjective] [noun]."

Depending on class size and time available, allow several or everyone to take a turn. You should hear some pretty interesting combinations! Afterward, ask students to tell how they would really fill in those blanks. Take the opportunity to share your own response as well.

Transition into the Bible study by saying, "We all have cherished possessions and relationships. While we may claim to love God above all, how would we react if we were convinced that God wanted us to sacrifice that which we truly cherished? Abraham found himself in that position. Let's see what happened."

Into the Word

Invite a volunteer to read aloud [Genesis 22:1-3, 6-14](#). Then divide students into three groups, giving each group paper, a pen, and one of the following assignments.

Group 1—Write a soliloquy in which Abraham describes what was going through his mind during his three-day journey. The commentary’s observations on [Hebrews 11:17, 19](#) (pages 235, 237, and 238) might prove helpful.

Group 2—List comparisons between Isaac and Jesus. Some additional Scriptures to consider are [2 Chronicles 3:1](#); [John 19:17](#); and [1 John 4:10](#).

Group 3—Imagine that before Abraham left with Isaac, he told his wife what God had asked him to do. Write diary entries from Sarah’s perspective to reflect her thoughts during the period that Abraham and Isaac were gone. Part of those entries may be reflections on the situations surrounding Isaac’s birth ([Genesis 18:1-15](#)).

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “That’s an Order!” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have students work individually or in small groups to put the events from today’s text in chronological order.

After either activity, pose the following questions for discussion (one at a time, not all at once):

What was God’s purpose in calling for this sacrifice?

Had you been Abraham, what would your initial reaction have been?

What do you imagine Abraham said to himself in order to move past that reaction and obey?

How was Isaac’s response to his father’s instructions similar to Abraham’s response to God’s?

How did things turn out at a time when God required you to give up something?

Wrap up this segment by saying, “People are reluctant to make personal sacrifices unless they can see a clear reason for doing so. By being willing to offer his son without being given the reason, Abraham set an example that God can be trusted to have the reason.”

Into Life

Write *The Lord Will Provide* on the board. Say, “This was Abraham’s name for the spot where he went to sacrifice his son and where God provided the ram. When was a time God provided for you in a remarkable way?” Allow students to respond freely, but don’t put anyone on the spot to answer. Pray together, thanking God for his gracious provision.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “God Will Provide” activity from the reproducible page. Have students work individually or in small groups. They are to read the Scriptures there and think about how they need greater faith in “our God who provides” relative to their present circumstances.