


the
Jesus 
Storybook
Bible
Curriculum

The present

The story of Abraham and Isaac, from Genesis 22

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum
By Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas

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The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” were written and developed from material by Timothy Keller and Redeemer Presbyterian Church and are used by special permission.

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Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.

☉ Briefly recap the main point of the previous story: “Last time we read about the promises God made to Abraham. God promised Abraham that he would give him a very big family and that God would rescue his people through Abraham’s family. Abraham believed God and God kept his promise to Abraham and Abraham had a son, Isaac. We also memorized a verse about Abraham.”

☉ Ask them to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Genesis 15:6 – ‘Abraham believed the LORD.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story, say: “Abraham loved his son, Isaac. Abraham loved Isaac the most. Think about the thing you love most. What is it? A toy? A sport? A pet? Pretend that you had to give up the thing you love most. Raise your hand if you think it is hard to give up things you love. Thank you, hands down.”

Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

Aim: To expend energy and learn about sacrifice.

Materials: 3 large cards – one has the word “DOCTOR” written on it, the second “FOOTBALL PLAYER,” and the third “SOLDIER” (add a photo if possible); a way of taping the cards to the walls.

1. Hang the cards on three different walls. Say: “We’re going to think about some people who had to give things up. Who wants to read the names on the cards? Yes, doctor, football player, soldier. Doctors, football players, and soldiers all have to give things up to become doctors, football players, or soldiers.”

2. Say: “I am going to call out some things people have to give up. Decide if the doctor, football player, or soldier had to give up that thing and then run to the wall near their card. You don’t all have to go to the same card. Sometimes a doctor and a soldier might have to give up the same thing. So some of you can stand near the doctor and some of you can stand near the soldier. Ready?”

3. Call out: “Junk food. Who has to give up junk food? Stand by the wall near their card.”

4. Comment appropriately on their choices; e.g., “Correct, football players have to give up junk food. Do some of you want to stand by another card? Good, soldiers also have to give up junk food to be soldiers. Good, sit back down in the circle.”

5. Play this through a few times with the words: “time” (all three); “sleep” (doctor and soldier); “home” (soldier). Ask them to sit down in between each word.

6. At the end of the activity, ask everyone to sit back down in the circle and say: “Sometimes we have to give up something for something we love more. Many football players are asked to give up junk food, which they love. Because they love football more than junk food, they are willing to give up junk food. In our story today, Abraham is asked to give up something he loves for something he loves even more. Let’s find out if he’s willing to do it.”

Story Time

7 min. 

Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 62–69 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CD1 track 7. At the appropriate place in the story, please show the children the illustration on page 67 and explain that a ram is a male sheep.

Notes for Teachers on the Text

Some readers will have understandable objections to this story, especially as it is often interpreted. Some people have interpreted this story as: “God called Abraham to murder his son, and Abraham showed his faith and submission by getting ready to do it. So we should do whatever God calls us to do.” But this is to misunderstand the meaning of the firstborn son in Jewish thought and symbolism. God over and over again told the Hebrews that because of their sinfulness, the lives of their firstborn are automatically forfeit. The only way to change this was for the firstborn to somehow be redeemed with sacrifice or ransomed with payment.

When God said that the firstborn child’s life belonged to him unless ransomed, he was saying in the most vivid way possible that every family on earth owes a debt to eternal justice – the debt of sin. The firstborn was, in traditional cultures, the bearer of all the family’s hopes for a prosperous future. That is why God’s call to Abraham to sacrifice his son was enormously painful; it appeared that he was abandoning his promises to Abraham. But the charge was not incomprehensible. God was not asking him to murder his son. He was calling in Abraham’s debt.

It is hard not to notice the resonance of this call to Abraham with all the others, especially the first one in Genesis 12. Then and now he was called to “go,” leaving all his security, comfort, and everything his heart rested in. Then and now he was called to make his heart’s dearest objects into an “offering” to God. In Genesis 12, those things were more general. He was giving up his friends, most of his family, life in a civilized, safe place. These are major sacrifices. God was asking Abraham to trust in God’s promise as his security and significance, not these other things. That is what God is doing again

now, as Abraham is called to offer up Isaac, the dearest thing in his life.

In every case, God is saying, “Don’t look to anything but me. Make me your ultimate security, worth, and hope. Don’t trust in anything but me. Don’t rest your heart in anything more than me for your significance and acceptability.”

But the ultimate nature of this test is summed up in the term God deliberately uses with emphasis in Genesis 22:2: “your son, your only son.” It is not literally true that Isaac is Abraham’s only son. But Isaac is Abraham’s only son in that all his hopes are focused on Isaac: he is the promised son, the one through whom God promised to rescue his people.

Did Abraham push himself up the mountain simply saying, “I have to obey God perfectly! I can do it! I must do it!” and so on? No, Genesis 22:8 shows that Abraham had decided to cling to the goodness and promises of God despite all appearances. He says, “God himself will provide the lamb.” Abraham could not have known exactly what God would do, nor does it seem likely he believed specifically that a ram-substitute would be discovered. He was simply saying, “God will provide ... somehow.” Verse 5 also seems to be an indication of Abraham’s hope, because he tells his servants that “we will come back to you.”

In other words, he did not go up the mountain saying, “I can do it”; rather, he went up the mountain saying, “God will do it ... but I don’t know how.” Somehow God would remove the debt on the firstborn and keep the promises he’d made.

Abraham had his eyes fixed on a provision that he could not even imagine, but he knew was there. We, this side of the cross, can truly see the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Understanding the Story

15 min. 

Aim: To understand that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son.

Materials: A microphone (this can be made out of paper, though if you can get a real microphone children enjoy using it); crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, ask: "Have you ever received a present? Raise your hand. Okay, hands down. In our story today, God asked Abraham to give him a present. What was it? Yes, it was his son Isaac. We read in the story that Abraham liked giving presents to God; for example, Abraham gave God his animals. When someone gives God an animal as a present, what is that called? Correct, it is called a sacrifice. In our story today, God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac."

2. Say: "We are going to retell this story from Abraham's point of view. So everyone pretend to be Abraham and pass the microphone around the circle. When you have the microphone, tell just one short part of what happened to Abraham and then pass the microphone to the next person. I'll start."

3. Hold the microphone and say: "Hello, my name is Abraham and God made some amazing promises to me. One promise was that when I was very old I would have a child. And I did! His name is Isaac and I love him very much. But one day God asked me to ..." Do not finish your sentence, but hand the microphone to a child in the circle and ask them to continue.

4. Prompt as needed to make sure the entire story is told; e.g., "Yes, that did happen, but something happened before that ...," etc. If a child is struggling, whisper a hint or ask one of the questions below to help. (If the children are really struggling, you may simply want to use the questions below, asking them to pass the microphone to the next child when they have answered their question as Abraham).

5. As the microphone passes around, ask suitable questions to help the children think about and remember the story, e.g.:

- ☉ Why did God ask you to sacrifice Isaac?
- ☉ Did you obey God? Why?
- ☉ Where did you take Isaac?
- ☉ What did you and Isaac carry with you up the mountain?
- ☉ What did Isaac ask you?
- ☉ In answer to Isaac's question, who did you say would give the lamb for the sacrifice?
- ☉ What did you do when you got to the place for the sacrifice?
- ☉ Why did God tell you not to sacrifice your son, Isaac?
- ☉ Where was the ram?
- ☉ Why did God provide the ram?

6. At the end of the story, take the microphone and say: "I, Abraham, almost sacrificed my son, my only son, whom I love. But God provided a ram for the sacrifice instead of Isaac. That's my story, so far."

7. If you have time, repeat this activity but this time everyone is Isaac. Again you can start with an introduction; e.g., “Hello, my name is Isaac. I live with my father, Abraham, and my mother, Sarah. My family loves God very much. We often give God animals as presents or sacrifices. One day my father and I set off . . .”

8. As before, as the microphone passes around, ask suitable questions to help the children think about the story, e.g.:

- ☉ What were you carrying as you went up the mountain?
- ☉ What question did you ask your father Abraham?
- ☉ What happened when you got to the place of sacrifice?
- ☉ How did you feel when your father put you on the altar?
- ☉ Did you struggle or run away? Why?
- ☉ How did you feel when you saw the ram?

9. Toward the end of the allocated time, take the microphone and say: “The ram was sacrificed instead of me. The end, for now!”

10. Give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Say: “You can see on your paper a picture of Abraham, Isaac, and the ram. You can also see three questions and the answers. But one word from each answer is missing. Let’s fill in the missing words together. Look at the question at the top of your paper. Let me read it to you: ‘Abraham was willing to give God his only son whom he loved, why?’ Fill in the missing word that starts with the letter ‘l’; you can work in pairs if you like; you have 5 seconds.”

11. Ask: “Who can tell me the missing word? That’s right Abraham trusted God and **loved** God more than anything else. Next question: God stopped Abraham from killing Isaac. What did God provide for the sacrifice instead of Isaac? Fill in the missing word that starts with the letter ‘r’; you have 5 seconds.”

12. Ask: “Who can tell me the missing word? Yes, a **ram**. Last question: What did Abraham do with the ram? Fill in the missing word that starts with the letter ‘s’; you have 5 seconds.”

13. Ask: “Who can tell me the missing word? Correct, Abraham sacrificed the ram instead of his **son**.”

For larger groups: You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher and a microphone. Each teacher can then help their circle retell the story.

Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: “God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, whom he loved, but then God provided a ram instead. But later, God actually sacrificed someone he loved. Who was it? Yes, God sacrificed his only Son, Jesus.”

Say: “We also read in the story that, like Isaac, ‘another Son (that is Jesus) would climb another hill, carrying wood on his back.’ What was the wood this time? Yes, it was the cross. God sacrificed Jesus his only Son, whom he loved, for us.”

Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: “What did we discover about Jesus from today’s story?”

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, thanking God that he sent his Son, his only Son, to die for us. Pray that you and the children would learn to trust God and to love God more than anything else.

Ask the children to thank God for his love and to pray that they would love God more than anything else.

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

2 min. 

☉ Introduce the verse: “Abraham believed God’s promises and he loved God more than anything else. The verse we memorized about Abraham helps with this story too.”

☉ Announce the verse: “Remember the verse, Genesis 15:6 — ‘Abraham believed the LORD.’”

☉ Read the verse out loud together as a group.

☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents and to memorize the verse for next time.

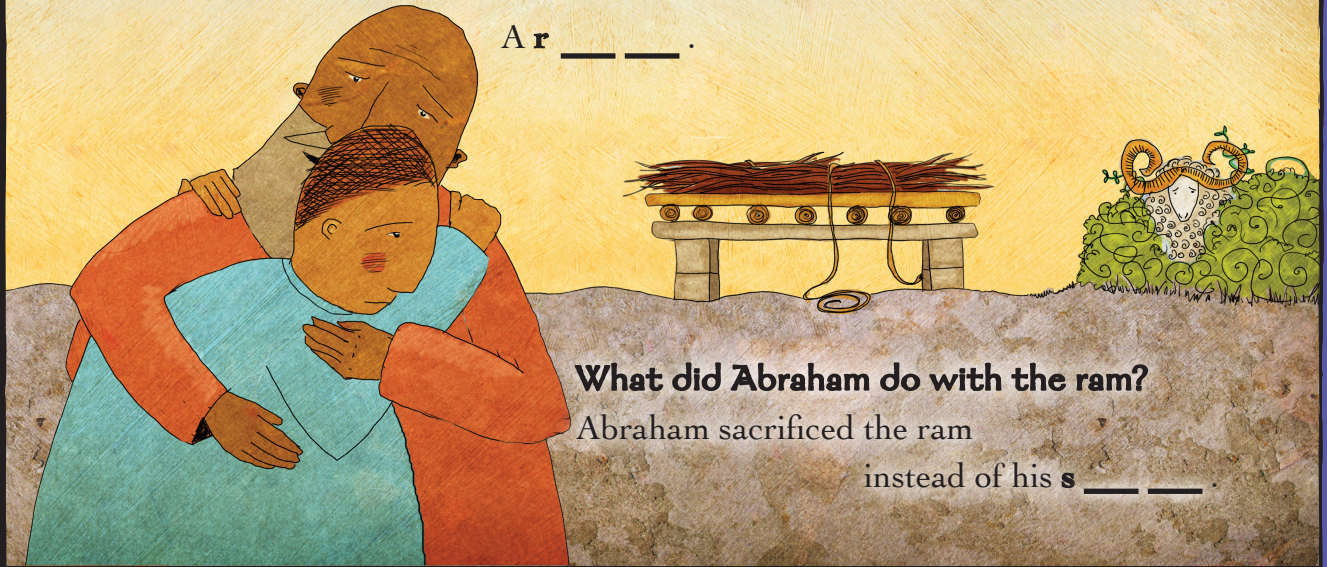


Abraham was willing to give God his only son whom he loved, why?

Abraham trusted God and I _____ God more than anything else.

What did God provide for the sacrifice instead of Isaac?

A r _____ .



What did Abraham do with the ram?

Abraham sacrificed the ram instead of his s _____

Jesus in the Story



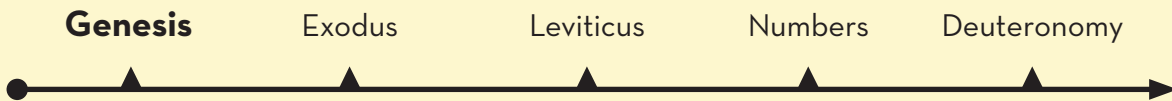
What did you discover about Jesus from this story?



Jesus

A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

Abraham believed the LORD. (Genesis 15:6)



Notes for parents: From the story we learned that Abraham was asked to give up something he really loved — his only son, Isaac. God provided a sacrifice in Isaac's place. God later provided the ultimate sacrifice, his only Son, Jesus. Please help your child to memorize the verse and the Scripture reference for next time. Please review with them the place of the book of Genesis, using the diagram above. www.jesusstorybookbible.com

