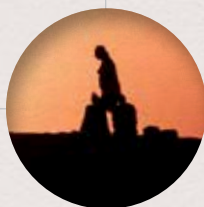
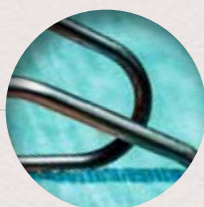


Genesis 20–50



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults • Personal Study Guide • Spring 2024 • CSB

FAMILY TIES

When families get together for reunions or holidays, the generations can run deep. For example, a father and mother might represent the roots of family tree, serving as the patriarch and matriarch of the group. Their children represent the next row of branches. Over time, the tree continues to grow as grandchildren—and even great-grandchildren—join the brood. That kind of generational legacy can be a tremendous source of pride and gratitude!

It's also amazing to think about how far back these lines can stretch. In some cases, the oldest members of the family may have been born before the Second World War began. Meanwhile, the youngest may have come along after the most trying days of the COVID-19 pandemic had passed. If so, nearly a century of history can gather under one roof. That's a lot of years and a lot of family stories to share.

Family lines are a big part of the book of Genesis, as well. Several times in the earliest chapters of the Bible, the human writer, Moses, included the lineage of individuals that readers meet along the way. In chapter 12, though, Moses narrowed his focus to one particular line when he introduced us to Abram (later known as Abraham).

Genesis 20–50 follow the adventures—and, sometimes, misadventures—of Abraham and his descendants. We meet his son, Isaac, and his grandson, Jacob. We read about the dysfunctional relationship between Jacob's sons, especially toward their brother, Joseph. That's four generations of one important, albeit imperfect, family.

The focus on Abraham's family isn't just for entertainment purposes, though. God inspired Moses to share these biographical narratives for a very significant reason. Those twelve sons of Jacob—the offspring of Abraham—were the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel. And, through the nation of Israel, God later provided the greatest gift in the world, His Son, Jesus Christ.

When you think about it, through Jesus, God has completed the circle of family. Through one earthly family, He's made it possible for every person to become a member of His family. Even the most broken human can be adopted as His son or daughter if they will just accept Jesus's sacrifice for their sins. If you're ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here's what you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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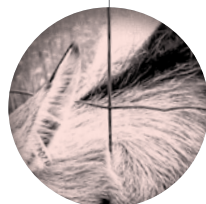
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*Evangelistic Emphasis



MEET THE WRITER

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FROM **THE TEAM LEADER**

Relationships are key to a happy life. Strong relationships bring joy, while challenging ones can usher in seasons of stress or worry. Trust lies at the center of all good relationships. Without trust, a friendship will only deepen so far before reaching a plateau. Without an assurance that our coworkers can be relied upon, a work project will fall short of what it could be.

In Genesis 20–50, we read of God’s relationship with His people. God’s character is revealed through His actions and purposes, offering us a clear understanding of His identity and nature. We see His heart for people and His willingness to extend mercy; through it all we see His trustworthiness. Simply, God does what He says He will do. What began as a promise to Abram in Genesis 12 unfolds in unexpected ways that only God could have orchestrated. Through it all, His faithfulness is unmistakable.

This is indeed good news. God’s faithfulness extends to His people today. We can be assured that every promise He has given to us in His Word will be kept. He is trustworthy!

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Allon-bacuth [al lahn-BAK uhth]—burial place of Rebekah’s nurse, Deborah; means “oak of weeping” (Gen. 35:8)

Beer-sheba [bee ehr-SHEE buh]—place where Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech (Gen. 21:22-33) and settled and lived for a time (21:33; 22:19); where God appeared to Isaac (26:23-25), a stopping place for Jacob as he journeyed to Egypt (46:1-5)

Bethel [BETH-uhl]—place name meaning “house of God,” where Abraham built an altar (Gen. 12:8; 13:1-4) and where God appeared to Jacob twice (28:10-22; 35:1-16); previously called Luz (28:19)

Bethuel [beh THYOO uhl]—nephew of Abraham and son of Nahor (Gen. 22:22), father of Rebekah (24:15,24); town where the children of Shimei lived (1 Chron. 4:30)

Goshen [GOH shuhn]—land the Pharaoh assigned to Joseph’s family when they entered Egypt (Gen. 47:6,11) and occupied by the Hebrews from the time of Joseph until the exodus

Haran [HAY ran]—the place where the Lord spoke to Abraham and called him to leave his family and go to the land of Canaan (Gen. 11:31-12:5); the place where Jacob went to marry (28:10; 29:4)

Ishmaelites [ISH may el ights]—descendants of Ishmael; the people to whom Joseph was sold by his brothers (Gen. 37:28)

Laban [LAY buhn]—Rebekah’s brother (Gen. 24:29); father of Leah and Rachel (29:16)

Luz [LUHZ]—place name meaning “almond tree”; original name of Bethel (Gen. 28:19)

Milcah [MIL kuh]—Abraham’s niece, wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, and mother of Bethuel, Rebekah’s father (Gen. 11:29; 24:15).

Moriah [muh RIGH uh]—place Abraham would have sacrificed Isaac as a burnt offering, but God intervened and provided a ram (Gen. 22:2,13)

Nahor [NAY hawr]—the name of Abraham’s brother and grandfather (Gen. 11:22-26); town in Mesopotamia where Abraham’s servant sought a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24)

Peniel [PEN ih el]—site on River Jabbok where Jacob wrestled with the stranger (Gen. 32:24-32); alternate form of Penuel (32:30-31)

Shechem [SHEK uhm]—place Abram stopped when arriving in the land (Gen. 12:6-7); Jacob settled there after returning from Paddan-aram (33:18-19); name of the chieftain of the city of Shechem who defiled Dinah (34:2-5)

BIBLE READING PLAN

MARCH

- 1. Genesis 20:1-8
- 2. Genesis 20:9-18
- 3. Genesis 21:1-7
- 4. Genesis 21:8-21
- 5. Genesis 21:22-34
- 6. Genesis 22:1-11
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- 9. Genesis 23:12-20
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- 6. Genesis 31:36-44
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- 8. Genesis 32:1-12
- 9. Genesis 32:13-23
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- 29. Genesis 50:1-14
- 30. Genesis 50:15-21
- 31. Genesis 50:22-26

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

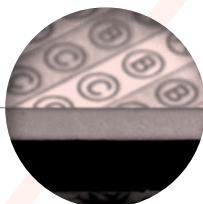
Genesis lays the foundation for what we read in the rest of the Bible. It helps us understand our origins as people created in God's image, humanity's fall into sin, and the beginning of God's redemptive work on our behalf. Chapters 1-11 record the history of the earliest ages beginning with God's creation of the world. Chapter 12 introduces the history of the patriarchs beginning with Abraham and ending with Joseph's death.

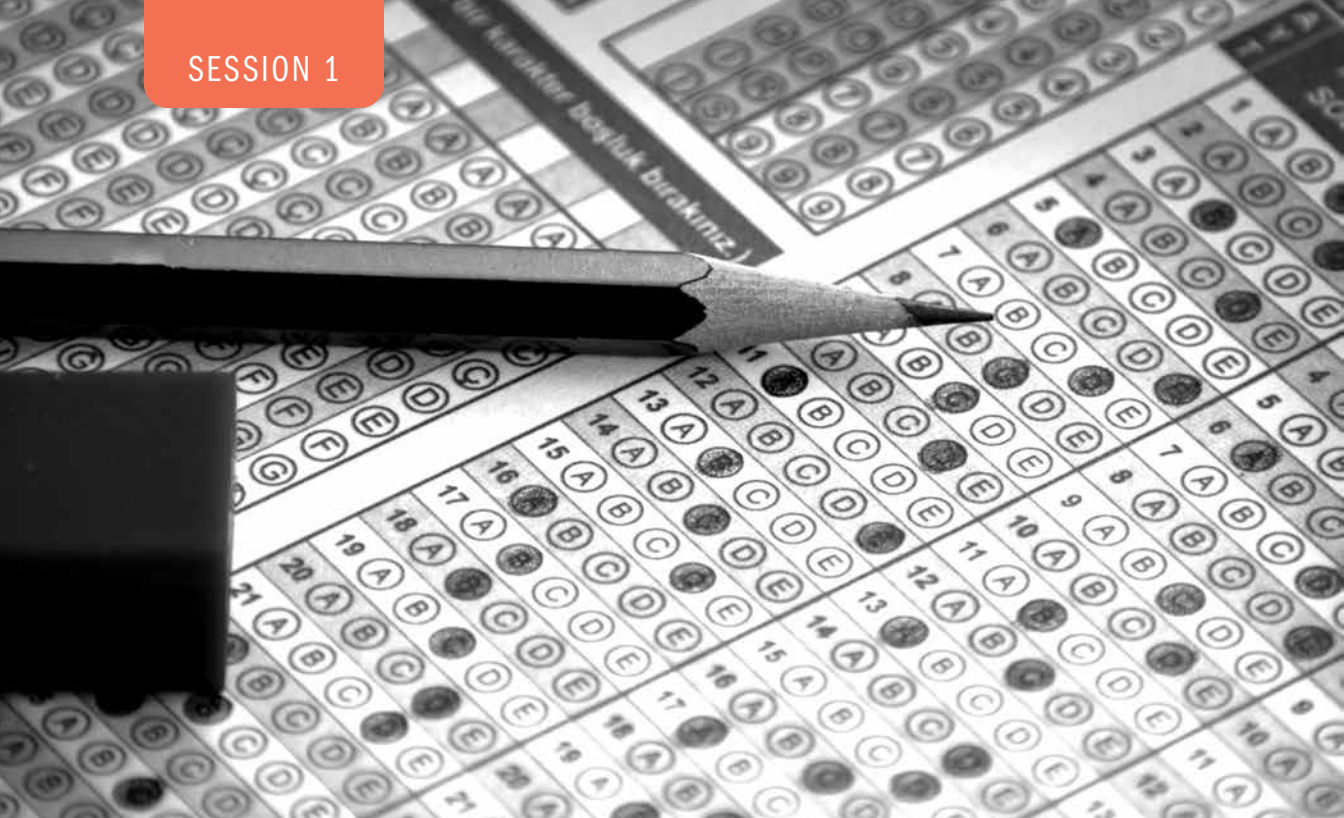
MAJOR THEMES AND TEACHINGS IN GENESIS 20-50:

- The importance of faith. The patriarchs learned the importance of following God in faith (see Heb. 11:8-22).
- God provides the means of salvation, even as He provided a ram for Abraham to offer instead of Isaac (Gen. 22).
- God directs the steps of those who seek Him, as seen in His guidance of Abraham's servant to Rebekah (Gen. 24).
- God is actively involved in His people's lives, as demonstrated in His revelation to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28).
- God is faithful to bless His people, as seen in His multiplication of Jacob's flocks (Gen. 30).
- God changes His people when they encounter Him, as evidenced in Jacob's wrestling match with God (Gen. 32).
- God gives His people an identity He expects them to fulfill, as revealed in the covenant renewal at Bethel (Gen. 35).
- Jealousy opens the door for acts of hatred, as illustrated in the way Joseph's brothers treated him (Gen. 37).
- Purity leads to honor from God, as Joseph ultimately experienced after faithfully rejecting temptation (Gen. 39).
- God reveals His plans when we trust Him, as displayed in Joseph's God-given ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams (Gen. 41).
- Acknowledging God's sovereignty helps us seek reconciliation with others, as exhibited in Joseph's initiative to forgive his brothers (Gen. 45).
- Followers of God faithfully remember His plans and purposes, as expressed in Joseph's refusal to seek revenge (Gen. 50).

OUTLINE

- I. God's Perfect Creation (Gen. 1:1-2:25)
- II. Humanity's Fall (Gen. 3:1-24)
- III. Adam's Family and Sin's Results (Gen. 4:1-6:8)
- IV. Noah's Family and the Flood (Gen. 6:9-9:29)
- V. The Nations and the Tower of Babylon (Gen. 10:1-11:26)
- VI. Abraham and God's Covenant (Gen. 11:27-19:38)
- VII. Isaac and the Promise (Gen. 20:1-25:11)
- VIII. Ishmael's Family (Gen. 25:12-18)
- IX. Rivalry: Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:19-35:29)
- X. Esau's Family: Father of the Edomites (Gen. 36:1-37:1)
- XI. Jacob's Family: Joseph and His Brothers (Gen. 37:2-50:26)





A Substitute

God provides the means for salvation.

GENESIS 22:1-14

Everyone who has gone to school knows what it's like to take tests, and we know not all tests are the same. Some are long, and some are short. Some are routine, and some are taken once in a lifetime. Some are not that important, while the results of others may have an impact on the rest of our lives. The Bible reveals that God uses tests to stretch us and mature our faith. As Abraham experienced tests in his life, he learned he could trust God to provide for all his needs—both materially and spiritually.

- How do you feel about tests? How should believers respond to God when He tests them?


UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

GENESIS 20:1-23:20

James wrote that God uses the testing of our faith to mature us spiritually (Jas. 1:2-4). This was true in Abraham's life. Genesis records how God instructed the patriarch to leave his family and go to an unspecified land that God would not only show him but also give to him. As soon as God finished speaking, Abraham got up and went (Gen. 11:27-12:8). Shortly after settling in Canaan, there was a severe famine. Instead of trusting God to provide, Abraham fled to Egypt. Not only that, he put Sarah into jeopardy while deceiving Pharaoh (12:10-13:4). Later, Abraham and Sarah would pull off a similar ruse with the king of Gerar (20:1-16).

Returning to Canaan, Abraham faced tests associated with his nephew, Lot. When it became apparent the land was not big enough for both of them, Abraham decided it was best for them to part ways. Instead of exercising his right as the patriarch of the clan and taking the fertile plain of the Jordan for himself, he allowed Lot to choose. Abraham finally cut his last tie with his extended family as God had instructed him earlier, and he trusted God to provide for him in the less fertile land of Canaan (13:5-18). Not long after that, Lot and his family were taken captive by a coalition of marauding kings. Abraham pursued them, defeated them, and rescued Lot. When the king of Sodom learned Abraham had saved his people, he offered Abraham a large reward, but Abraham refused it because he was trusting in God as his source of provision (14:1-24).

Following that, Abraham failed to wait on God to provide him an heir (16:1-16). When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God told him that he and Sarah would have a son. Abraham laughed, not believing it to be possible given their ages (17:1-22). Finally, after Isaac was born, there was conflict in Abraham's family. Therefore, God told Abraham to send away his son Ishmael. As difficult as it was, Abraham trusted and obeyed God (21:9-21). In Genesis 22, God had a final test for Abraham that would forever distinguish him as a man who had matured in his faith (Heb. 11:17-19).

 **As you read Genesis 22:1-14, consider how God has provided the means for our salvation.**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE COMMAND (GEN. 22:1-3)

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. ² “Take your son,” he said, “your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” ³ So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about.

VERSE 1

Three significant events in Genesis 21 set the stage for what transpires in Genesis 22. The phrase *after these things* connects the two chapters and highlights the significance of God’s timing in what He was about to do with Abraham. First, chapter 21 records the birth of the long-awaited, promised son, Isaac (21:1-8). Second, it records the turmoil that escalated in Abraham’s family with the birth of Isaac, ending with Hagar and Ishmael’s departure (21:9-21). Finally, even though Abraham acted wrongly before Abimelech and there had been tensions concerning a well, Abimelech was impressed with how God had blessed Abraham. Consequently, he approached Abraham and asked him to enter into a covenant of peace between them (21:22-32).

God’s long-awaited promise of an heir was fulfilled, and Isaac was now an adolescent. Abraham was enjoying peace both in his home and with his neighbors. It was when everything in Abraham’s life finally had come together that God presented Abraham with his most difficult test.

VERSE 2

Each of the three phrases in God’s command to Abraham is emphatic. The emphatic nature of His command to Abraham communicates that God understood that He was telling Abraham to do something that would be inexplicable to him. *Your only son* means “the only son you have.” Ishmael was also Abraham’s son, but Isaac was the only one remaining with Abraham and the one through whom all of the promises God made to Abraham would be fulfilled. *Whom you love* reveals that God realized how precious Isaac was to Abraham. It is the first time the word *love* is used in Genesis. These expressions all join together to accentuate how difficult this test of Abraham’s trust in God would be.

God instructed Abraham to take his son to ***the land of Moriah***. Later, Solomon’s temple was built on Mount Moriah in memorial of the events in this passage. God’s instructions to Abraham were clear: ***offer him there as a burnt offering***. Abraham was to build an altar, bind his son onto the altar, kill him, then completely burn his corpse. The *burnt offering* is sometimes called a “whole burnt offering” because the entire sacrifice was consumed with fire. It was symbolic of the offeror’s total devotion to God. We must remember that this was a test and that nowhere in the Bible does God advocate human sacrifice. Later in God’s law, the Lord declared it was evil in His sight (Deut. 12:31; 18:10).

BIBLE SKILL: Dig into the meaning and usage of key words or phrases.

Focus on the word “tested” in Genesis 22:1. Read 1 Peter 1:3-9, initially addressed to first-century believers undergoing various trials or tests of their faith. According to this passage, what is God’s goal in testing His people? How would you evaluate Abraham’s response to the supreme test that he faced in offering Isaac? What tests of faith have you recently faced or are currently facing? How would you evaluate your response to those tests?

VERSE 3

This verse emphasizes the immediacy of Abraham’s response to God. He ***got up early*** and began gathering everything he needed. His actions demonstrate he intended to obey God, no matter how difficult it would be. Abraham submitted to God’s command because he had learned he could trust God—even when, from a human perspective, it appeared to make little sense to do so.

Why does God ask His people to do difficult things?

THE CLIMB (GEN. 22:4-8)

⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we’ll come back to you.” ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, “My father.” And he replied, “Here I am, my son.” Isaac said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” Then the two of them walked on together.

VERSES 4-5

The *third day* indicates how long it took for Abraham to reach the destination. More than that, it could be a foreshadowing of the three-day journey Israel made into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord while they were still in Egypt (Ex. 3:18; 5:3; 8:27). Also, *third day*, in the Old Testament often is associated with a significant event (Gen. 40:12-13; Ex. 19:15; Lev. 7:17-18; 19:6-7).

***Trusting God means we worship Him
even when we are unsure of what He is doing.***

Abraham’s instructions to his servants indicate the depth of his faith in God: ***Stay here . . . we’ll come back to you.*** The writer of Hebrews indicated Abraham had so much confidence in God’s faithfulness to keep His promises that he believed even if God allowed him to go through with the sacrifice of Isaac, God would raise Isaac back from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham believed that he and his son were going together to the place of sacrifice, and that they would return together. This confidence was not only conveyed to Isaac but also to the two servants who, like Isaac, must have wondered where the lamb for the burnt offering was (v. 7). Trusting God means we worship Him even when we are unsure of what He is doing. This is a powerful witness to others.

VERSES 6-8

Isaac was given the burden of carrying *the wood for the burnt offering* while Abraham had *the fire and the knife* in his hand. Then they *walked on together* to the place of sacrifice. A Jewish scholar from between AD 300-500 commented that Isaac's carrying the wood on his back was like a condemned man carrying his own cross on His shoulder. Isaac carrying the wood brings to mind John's description of Jesus carrying his own cross to Golgotha (John 19:17) to bear the punishment of God for our sin.

Isaac's question demonstrates that he did not understand what was going on: *where is the lamb for the burnt offering?* Though Abraham trusted God, he did not know exactly what God was going to do or have him do. His reply put the matter entirely in God's hands: **God himself will provide the lamb.** It is impossible to know what Isaac was thinking. What we can observe is Isaac's complete trust in his father as the two of them continued to walk together to make the burnt offering.



What makes trusting God for our needs difficult?

THE TEST (GEN. 22:9-12)

⁹ When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" He replied, "Here I am." ¹² Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me."

VERSES 9-10

Abraham and Isaac finally reached *the place* God had told Abraham about in verse 2. When they did, Abraham went about the normal procedure for building an altar and preparing it for a burnt offering. The normal process was to build the altar, place the wood on it, bind up the animal, and place it on the wood. After that, the offeror slaughtered the animal with a knife and then set the wood on fire to consume the entirety of the animal's corpse.

After preparing the altar, Abraham **bound** his son. Next, he **placed him on the altar on top of the wood**. By now, Isaac must have realized he was the “lamb” to be slaughtered. As his elderly father bound him, it appears the younger, stronger Isaac allowed him to do so. Perhaps Abraham bound Isaac because that was just how it was normally done, or maybe he did so to ensure that Isaac could not move so that the strike of Abraham’s knife would be as quick and merciful as possible. After all of these things were completed, Abraham **took the knife** and readied it to slay his son.

VERSES 11-12

The angel of the LORD emphatically called to Abraham. **Here I am**, Abraham replied. The angel instructed Abraham not to harm the boy. In Abraham’s willingness to trust and obey God even when it meant giving to God the life of his beloved son, he demonstrated that he truly feared God. In the Bible, fearing God involves obeying and trusting God because of one’s devotion to Him.

 How are the words “Here I am” evident in your life?

DID YOU KNOW?

The Bible records six people saying “Here I am” to God: Abraham (Gen. 22:1,11); Jacob (Gen. 31:11; 46:2); Moses (Ex. 3:4); Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4); Isaiah (Isa. 6:8); and Ananias (Acts 9:10). “Here I am” is always the appropriate response when God calls.

THE SUBSTITUTE (GEN. 22:13-14)

¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide, so today it is said, “It will be provided on the LORD’s mountain.”

VERSES 13-14

When **Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns**, he realized God had provided a substitute for Isaac. He believed God would provide a sacrifice, and God did. As a memorial to what God had done, Abraham named that place **The LORD Will Provide**. From then on, this name not only reminded people of what God had done for Abraham and Isaac, it also prompted them to look to the future saying, **It will be provided**.

God has provided a substitute for sinners.

God has provided a substitute for sinners. The just punishment for sinners is death (Rom. 6:23). But God has provided for us a Substitute. Jesus gave His life in our place so that through faith in Him we might have eternal life. Prophesying about Jesus, Isaiah wrote, “He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned our own way; and the LORD has punished him for the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:5-6).

 **How does the ram point to the mission of Jesus?**

 **Pause to give thanks to God for sending Jesus as your Substitute.**

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

In His substitutionary death on the cross Jesus made provision for the redemption of men from sin. (See 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Colossians 1:19-20.)

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers are to be obedient to God alone.
- + Believers can be confident that God has a plan for them.
- + Believers can demonstrate faith in God.
- + Believers can trust Jesus as their substitute.

Pray for people you know who have not yet trusted Jesus as their substitute.

What are some tangible ways you can demonstrate your faith in God this week?

Memorize Genesis 22:8.

Prayer Needs
