

FASCINATING STORIES OF FORGOTTEN LIVES

STUDY THREE

Abraham: The Father Who Released His Son

Genesis 22:1–14

There is something very stressful about holding precious things loosely, only to have them taken from us, but even more so, to hold them tightly and have them removed.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll



To deepen your study, scan to listen.

EVERY parent who has choked back a tear on a child's first day of school understands releasing. Every retiree who tapes shut the last box, removes the last picture, and says the last good-bye understands releasing. Anyone who has felt money and possessions slip through his or her fingers. Anyone who has waved at a disappearing moving van. Anyone who has taken a heart-wrenching walk past a coffin understands releasing too.

Make no mistake: our tendency is to hold our treasures tightly, and it's hard to let them go. We cling to our possessions, positions, passions, plans, and, most tightly, the people we love. However, experience teaches us that change is unchanging. We can't stop time or keep our castles from crumbling. So, we are wise to hold all things loosely. Still, our grip is strong, and release doesn't come naturally or easily.

When God pries open our fingers and pulls our treasures out of our hands, His intent is not to harm us but to test us. On what does our security rest? What or whom do we love most—the Giver of all good things or the things themselves?

This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study considers the life of Abraham in Genesis 22, where the story is not about the loss of a possession, or the loss of a position, or the loss of a long-awaited plan. This story is about the impending loss of someone close to Abraham's heart—Isaac, his dear son whom he greatly loved.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to minister to you through His Word. Record your prayer here.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When Abraham was 75 years old, God told him to leave his homeland and go to a land that He would show him. In this new land, Abraham's descendants would grow "into a great nation" (Genesis 12:2). At the time, however, Sarah was 65 years old and childless, and God's promise seemed improbable. Yet Abraham believed God, left his home, settled in Canaan . . . and waited.

Twenty-four years passed. When Abraham was 99 years old and any lingering hope of having a baby with Sarah had long vanished, God again appeared to him, promising to bless Sarah and Abraham with a son. Abraham "laughed to himself in disbelief," wondering how they could have a baby at their age (17:17). But, just as God said, one year later, according to [Genesis 21:1–8](#), Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac—whose name means "laughter." She and Abraham had waited *twenty-five years* for God to fulfill His promise! The old couple laughed and laughed . . . not in disbelief but in joy!

Then, years later, without warning, God told Abraham: "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much," and "sacrifice him" (22:2). What a shock! Put yourself in Abraham's shoes. What is your initial reaction to God's command?



Observation: God's Command, Abraham's Response, and God's Provision

Observation is the first step in gleaning truth from Scripture. Read the passage carefully, weighing each word. Watch for repetition and emphasis. Use your imagination to put yourself into the scene as if you were there.¹

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God's Command—Genesis 22:1–2

The author of Genesis revealed God's intention for calling Abraham in [Genesis 22:1](#). What was God's purpose, and why do you think the author disclosed it up front?

What did God command Abraham to do in [22:2](#)? What did He emphasize about Abraham and Isaac? What did God's command and wording foreshadow?

Abraham's Response—Genesis 22:3–10

According to [Genesis 22:3](#), how did Abraham respond to God's command? What qualities in Abraham do you observe in his response?

Read the dialogue between Abraham and his servants, and between Abraham and Isaac found in [22:4–8](#). What does [22:5](#) reveal about Abraham's confidence in God?

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Isaac didn't know what Abraham knew when he posed the natural question, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). How does Abraham's response to Isaac in Genesis 22:8 demonstrate a second instance of Abraham's unwavering faith in God?

Given the physical demand placed upon Isaac (22:6) coupled with his insightful question (22:7), we can assume Isaac was not a child but a teenager. In [22:9](#), Isaac willingly submitted to what he then recognized was happening—he was to be the sacrifice. What did his obedience reveal about his relationship with his father and with his God?

There's no fight. Isaac doesn't take off running down Mount Moriah. He's right there with his dad. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Then, "Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice" (22:10). But just at that moment . . .

God's Divine Provision—Genesis 22:11–14

What happens in [Genesis 22:11](#)? How many times did the angel of the Lord call Abraham's name? How many commands did the angel of the Lord give to Abraham in [22:12](#)? What was the purpose of God's test of Abraham?

What phrase from God to Isaac is repeated in both [22:2](#) and [22:12](#)?

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Note how the narrative in [Genesis 22:13–14](#) fulfills 22:8. Where do you see the concept of substitution in 22:13?

Why would a good God ask a kind, gentle, and loving father like Abraham to do such a thing? It's clear. To test the validity and authenticity of the man's faith. Was Abraham more in love with the gift of God or God Himself?
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God Is Always Trustworthy

In [Genesis 17:15–19](#), God made a two-fold promise to Abraham. First, God promised that Abraham would bear a son, Isaac, through his wife Sarah. The aging couple waited 25 years for the fulfillment of this promise. Second, God promised that Sarah “will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants” (Genesis 17:16)—a prophecy of Israel’s kingdom that wouldn’t be fulfilled for another thousand years.

Given Abraham’s knowledge of God’s character, confidence in God’s covenant, and deep love for Isaac, how did God’s command to sacrifice Isaac test his faith? Specifically, list the issues that were at risk as Abraham released Isaac.

Isaac may be considered a “type” of Christ because his life and actions foreshadowed aspects of Christ’s life and actions. From our passage, record all the similarities you can identify between Isaac and Christ, noting the accompanying verses for each type.

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The ram also foreshadowed Christ. What analogy can you draw between Christ and the “ram caught by its horns in a thicket” (Genesis 22:13)?

The angel of the Lord told Abraham, “Now I know that you truly fear God” (22:12). In your own words, summarize what it means to fear God as illustrated by Abraham. Consult your resources like *Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* to think through the meaning of *fear* in the Bible.

“You’ve passed the test, My son, My aging son. Now I know that you really reverence Me.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: New Testament Illumination

In *Hebrews 11:17–19*, the writer of Hebrews references this event. Take a moment to read this passage and make a few notes on how it contributes to your understanding of Genesis 22:1–14 and the significance of Abraham’s faith for future believers, including you!

Abraham released his precious son into God’s hands knowing that somehow God would provide for both of them. That’s faith! How about you? Are you as confident as Abraham that God will provide for you? Reflect on ways you can grow in your faith as you apply the principles from our passage.

This answers the question, how Abraham could have said, “We will go, we will worship, and we will return to you.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: What Is God Asking You to Release?

Centuries later, after kingdoms had come and gone, after timeless sands had covered Abraham's and Isaac's footprints, Mount Moriah came to be known by another name: Calvary. Here another Father released His Son. Three analogies between Abraham and Isaac, God and Christ help us apply our study of Abraham, Isaac, and the concept of "releasing."

1. *God the Father showed us how to give when He released His dear Son to us.* God released Jesus in Bethlehem where, as an infant, He would breathe, cry, grow, learn, teach, and serve. He released His dear Son to die and bear the weight of the sins of the world.
2. *God the Son showed us how to die when He released Himself to the Father.* That took place at the cross. Isaac beautifully illustrated Christ's willing sacrifice when he gave himself on the altar without any fight.
3. *God the Spirit will show us how to live and die when we release whatever has us in its grip.* Is it a possession? A position? A long-awaited plan? Could it be a person?

Which one of these three analogies most impacts you? Why? Where and how might you apply it to your current situation?

Think back to the opening paragraph. Can you identify with any of these scenarios of letting go? Describe a time when you had to release something or someone you dearly loved. Or perhaps you're tightly gripping something or someone. What are your circumstances, and how can you release this "Isaac" into God's hands?

God is trustworthy; He will provide. If He's taking from you some cherished or delightful situation, He has something in its place. He has a ram in the thicket. You may not see it right now and you wouldn't guess where it is or how God will come through, but He will. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I find comfort, satisfaction, great pleasure, and even relief dwelling in the comfort zone of the familiar. The risk of change is always difficult. May I hold the familiar loosely. May I hold changes loosely. Help me realize that You're the only One worth holding onto tightly. Provide, Father, the things I cannot provide for myself. As a modern-day Abraham, give me relief, faith, and strength. In Your Son, You have provided the ram in the thicket. Remind us again, Lord, that You are faithful. We pray together in the name of Jesus, Your best gift. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Marshall F. Davis in collaboration with Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1990, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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