



READ: Genesis 22:1-2, 6-14, (NirV)

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," Abraham replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son. He is the one you love. Take Isaac. Go to the place called Moriah. Give your son to me there as a burnt offering. Sacrifice him on the mountain I will show you." ...

Abraham had his son Isaac carry the wood for the burnt offering. He himself carried the fire and the knife. And the two of them walked on together. Then Isaac 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?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them walked on together. They reached the place God had shown Abraham. There Abraham built an altar. He arranged the wood on it. He tied up his son Isaac. Abraham placed him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand. He picked up the knife to kill his son.

But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven. He said, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," Abraham replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not harm him. Now I know that you would do anything for God. You have not held back from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked around. There in a bush he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram. He sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide. To this day people say, "It will be provided on the mountain of the Lord."

ENTER THE STORY:

What an odd thing for God to ask Abraham to do! Take your son and offer him as a burnt offering. After all, Isaac was Abraham's *ONLY* son and the beginning of God's promise to give Abraham a family as numerous as the stars. Without Isaac, the plan doesn't work. If Isaac died, God's Word would fail and he would break his promise.

This doesn't seem like a very good idea...*UNLESS*... God has a plan that we can't see. God is the *BEST* teacher and he knows how to help Abraham understand just how *FAR* a Father must go to save his children.

How does Abraham respond? *With faith and obedience!*

When you are asked to do something at home, are you good at obeying the very FIRST time? It's hard to obey, isn't it?

Abraham obeyed because he *KNEW* God would be faithful to his word. He knew – one way or another – he would be coming back down that mountain with his son, so he saddled up his donkey and set out on yet another journey where he didn't know the whole story. In the end, he was right! God provided a substitute so that Isaac was saved.

This story is a picture of another very important story in our Bible!

In that story there is another Father who was also willing to take the Son he loved very much and offer him up as a sacrifice. Instead of finding an animal caught in a thorn bush, that Son would wear a crown of thorns and lay down his life for others. His Father would be *SO, SO* sad when his Son died, but death would not be able to hold him, and after three days he would raise from the dead and go back to heaven to be with his Father.

Do you know who this special Father and Son are? It's God, and his Son Jesus!

It's always Jesus! Every story either whispers his name or shouts it from the mountain tops, so we can understand that God has been teaching us about his Son all along the way.

- Don't miss him this Christmas season—because while he is the baby boy in the manger, he is also the lamb of God who
- takes away the sins of the world!
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■ **PRAY:** *God, we are always amazed at how you weave together the stories in the Old Testament so that they reflect the beautiful sacrifice of your Son. We long to know you and trust you as Abraham did, and we want to have faith and obey like Abraham did too. God, help us always trust your plan even if we don't understand. Amen.*