

LESSON 6 || THE OFFERING OF ISSAC

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Genesis 22:1-19

GOSPEL FOCUS: John 3:16

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- Grasp Abraham's faithfulness and God's desire to graciously provide even in the midst of calling us to sacrifice.
- See that God did not withhold His own Son as a sacrifice for the sins of His children.
- Be challenged to respond to God's grace and love shown through the giving of His Son, Jesus.

OVERVIEW:

Sometimes the Bible presents us with stories that cause us to scratch our heads. This may very well be one of those stories. The narrative of God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac catches us off guard, but the story's resolution provides us with a fantastic glimpse into the hearts of Abraham and God. When we dig deeper, we see that Isaac's "almost-sacrifice" meaningfully foreshadows another Father sending His Son to die.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

GENESIS

- *Author:* While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).

- *Time frame:* It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), the date for the writing of Genesis is estimated to be sometime in the 1400s or 1200s BC.
- *Purpose:* Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group that God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

JOHN

- *Author:* The Gospel of John was written by John the Apostle, son of Zebedee. A fisherman who left his trade to follow Jesus, John also penned the Book of Revelation and the three New Testament letters that bear his name.
- *Time frame:* The Gospel of John was probably written between 85 and 95 AD. John most likely wrote his gospel in Ephesus before he was exiled to Patmos.
- *Purpose:* John's stated purpose for writing this book can be found in John 20:30-31, the last two verses in his gospel: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John's goal seems to have been to clearly communicate a full theology of Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**— An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**— A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**— A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**— An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To get students thinking about faithfulness, even to the point of sacrificing life.
- *Set-Up:* You’re going to show an amazing example of a man who was prepared to sacrifice his life to save someone he barely knew. If you can show a video, prepare to show the following link:
 - o <https://youtu.be/0MR04C6kghU>
- If you can’t show a video, watch the video and summarize it for your students.

FIRST, explain to students that some of the most moving stories are of people giving their lives to save others. Explain that you’ll kick off your lesson with one of these stories. Then, either show the YouTube video or share your summary of the story.

THEN, ask for students’ reactions. Here are some questions to help stir the conversation:

- What is your initial reaction to this story?
- How likely are you to risk your life to save a family member or friend? How about a stranger? Explain your responses.
- What do you think it takes for people to reach a point where they can freely give up their lives to save another person?

NEXT, lead students in a brief discussion about faithfulness. Utilize these questions to help:

- Who is the most reliable person in your life right now?
- What factors cause that person to be so faithful to you?
- Do you believe that person would give their life for you?

FINALLY, explain to students that in this lesson, you’ll grasp the depth of one man’s faithfulness and how this man’s faithfulness led him through a more difficult situation than any he had ever faced. Continue explaining how even in the midst of a life or death choice, God graciously provided. Lastly, let students know they will be challenged to respond to God’s grace for themselves. Transition by **saying something like:**

- We’re continuing our study of the big-picture story of the Bible by spending some time digging into the hardest decision one man had ever had to make. And you’ll get to consider how you might react in the same situation.

TRANSITION TO THE STORY.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* For students to grasp Abraham's faithfulness and God's desire to graciously provide even in the midst of calling us to sacrifice.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful for jotting down some notes, but it's not essential.

FIRST, explain that in this lesson, you'll be looking at a time when Abraham's faith was tested in a way no one would want to be tested. If you'd like, use the Connecting the Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- God called Abraham to leave everything behind so that He could build a new nation (Genesis 12).
- As part of all of Abraham's adventures in faithfulness, God had promised him a son—even though Abraham was 100 years old!
- Regardless of the level of trust required, God always kept His promises to Abraham.

Encourage students to find Genesis 22:1-19 in their Bibles. While students are looking for this passage, use the Bible Background to offer some insight into Abraham's life leading up to this point.

OPTIONAL NOTE: If you want, here's a fun alternative to just reading the entire narrative one time through. Explain that you are about to do a live-action drama while the passage is read. Since many of the narratives in The Thread lessons are longer passages, allowing students to have a little fun acting this out is a nice way to break up the passages and keep things fresh. Ask for a volunteer reader who can read dramatically with great emotion. Once your reader is in place, ask for six volunteer actors. Explain that they won't have lines. They will simply act out their parts as the passage is being read. Once you have the volunteers in place, assign one to be God, two to be servants, one to be Abraham, one to be Isaac, and the remaining one to be the donkey. Perhaps the donkey should be portrayed by one of your more confident students? Be prepared to encourage the actors to really "get into their parts."

THEN, ask the dramatic reader to begin reading and the actors to begin acting. Once the unrehearsed dramatization of the passage has ended, give the reader and actors a round of applause. Then **ask:**

- **If this was a movie scene or a song, what would you name it?**
- **Do you find anything particularly shocking about this passage? Why?**

If you don't want to do the dramatic reading, simply read or have a student read through the entire narrative in verses 1-19.

NEXT, explain to students that you will now dig into the passage by discussing it section by section. Read or have a student read verses 1-5. Then, **ask:**

- **What is the purpose of a test?**
 - *Answers will vary* from humorous to serious. Flesh out the answers that lean toward the serious.
- **What traits in Abraham made him God's choice for this test?**
 - *Answer:* Faith and trust in God.

- **Why would a loving God ask someone to sacrifice their child?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Explain that child sacrifice was common in the cultures that worshipped false gods. So, the actual concept wouldn't have sounded as outrageous to Abraham as it does to us. Abraham would have understood that God was asking him to do something that was done during this time period and in this culture. But, still, it would most likely seem out of character with whom Abraham understood God to be. From reading the entire story, we know that God never intended Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Explain that the heart behind God's request will be made clear in The Thread section of the lesson.

THEN, read or have another student read verses 6-14. Ask:

- **What are some things that might have been going through Abraham's mind the night before and the morning of the trip?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Think about doubts, fears, escape, and even potentially renouncing his faith.
- **Do you think Abraham questioned God's trustworthiness by this point? Why or why not?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **Describe a time when you were anxiously awaiting a text or call. How did it feel when you finally received it? What do you think Abraham felt when he heard that he didn't have to sacrifice Isaac?**
 - *Answers will vary.* But help draw out the idea of relief and how it is such a powerful emotion.

FINALLY, read or have a student read verses 15-19. Then, ask:

- **God provided another sacrifice for Abraham when he needed it to save his son's life. What does that say about God when you're in times of intense struggle in your life?**
 - *Answers will vary.*
- **How is faithfulness central to this story?**
 - *Answer:* This act required great faith from Abraham. After waiting so very long for a son so that God's promise to make him into a great nation might begin to come true, Abraham needed resilient faith that God would keep that promise. He had to have faith in God's character, His Word, and His ability to make a way when there seemed to be no way.

MAKE SURE STUDENTS CLEARLY SEE THE FAITHFULNESS OF ABRAHAM, EVEN TO THE POINT OF BEING WILLING TO GIVE HIS SON'S LIFE. AND POINT OUT THE OBVIOUS WAY GOD PROVIDED THE RAM SO THAT ABRAHAM DID NOT HAVE TO SACRIFICE ISAAC. IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS, ADVANCE TO THE THREAD.

THE THREAD

FIRST, remind students that part of tracing the big-picture story of the Bible is to see where we notice echoes of the Gospel throughout Scripture. Explain that you're going to do that now. Instruct students to look up John 3. If you choose, reference the Bible Background to give them a brief overview of the Gospel of John. Then read or have a student read John 3:16. After the verse has been read, discuss the following questions:

- **How does this verse speak to today's Bible story?**
 - *Answer:* God's willingness to give His own Son's sinless life to save our sinful lives demonstrates a level of faithfulness and graciousness that is unmatched anywhere and by anyone. Abraham's willingness to give his own son's life in obedience to God demonstrates his faithfulness to obey God's commands, regardless of the cost. Faithfulness to the point of personal sacrifice is the pillar on which people (the created) mimic God (the Creator).
- **Can someone be faithful to something or someone without truly loving that something or someone?**
 - *Answer:* No. Faithfulness is both grounded in and fueled by unconditional love. God loved the world enough to give His Son. Abraham loved God enough to give his son.
- **What are the benefits of faithfully loving a gracious and faithful God?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Eternal life in heaven is an incredible no-brainer! But guide students toward realizing the earthly benefits they can experience right now. Faithfulness is not easy, but worth it. Our reward isn't just in heaven, but here and now in relationship with Jesus.

THEN, ask this question while explaining to students how God's mercy is evident in both The Story and The Thread.

- **God told Abraham to sacrifice the son he had waited a century for. Abraham could have withheld Isaac because of his love for him and the pain his death would cause, but he didn't. How is this similar to how God approached sending His Son to be sacrificed for the sins of all humankind?**
 - *Answers will vary.* Lead students to see that God didn't withhold His Son, even though God knew the cost. Because God loved us so much, He willingly gave His Son for the sake of all humankind.

IF YOUR STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY MORE QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION.

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* To help students consider what it means to sacrifice for God's sake.
- *Set-Up:* Have enough sheets of blank paper on hand for each person to get one sheet. Also, have enough pens or pencils to allow one per student.

FIRST, remind students about the weight of today's lesson—a father willing to give his son's life out of obedience to God. Say something like:

- **During this lesson, we've delved into the idea of sacrificial faithfulness. Let's be real. None of us want to be put in the position of sacrificing a loved one's life. Most of us wouldn't even want to sacrifice our phones!**

NEXT, hand each student a sheet of blank paper and a pen or pencil. Challenge students to use one side of the blank sheet of paper to jot down at least one possession that would be extremely difficult for them to give up and never see again.

FINALLY, bring this discussion home. Remind students that they are called by God to be willing to sacrifice for His purposes. Say something like:

- **God willingly gave His Son Jesus so that you could be forgiven of your sins. Jesus faithfully obeyed God even to the cross and the grave. Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son in obedience to God, demonstrating that nothing came**

between God and himself. God wants us to understand that His faithfulness to us is worth sacrificing for.

Ask students to consider how great a sacrifice Abraham was willing to make to remain faithful to God. Then ask them to consider the faithfulness of Jesus when He took our punishment on the cross. Finally, ask them to evaluate the level of faithfulness in their lives based on their reaction to what they wrote down on their sheet of paper. Emphasize that by doing so, they are taking the chance to consider God's actual position in their lives.

Once students have had adequate time to reflect on this, ask if anyone has any more questions. Remind them that faithfulness is a daily choice. Finally, close the Bible lesson in prayer.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 1 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.