

# EPOCHAL EVENTS NOBODY EXPECTED

## STUDY ONE

### An Aging Father and His Son

*Genesis 22:1–14*

*Epochal events remind us that God has His way in life's storms and shocking moments. We may be stunned in disbelief, but God is not surprised or at a loss to know what to do. His plan is unfolding perfectly.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**H**AVE you ever faced a trial that was so surprising, unprecedented, and intense that it took your breath away? You never saw it coming, and you had no idea how God would get you through . . . but somehow, He did!

Such severe trials are rare, thankfully. But they are among life's most valuable experiences because they reveal God's saving power in ways we otherwise would not see.

In this series, we'll examine four epochal events in which the main characters faced unexpected trials that seemed insurmountable until God intervened in an amazing way. Each episode began with an extreme test that stretched the individual's faith to the breaking point. The epochal event culminated in an epochal *moment*—a climactic saving act of God that has inspired generations of God's people to trust Him during their own impossible circumstances.

Our first study is based on an account of an aging father and his son: Abraham and Isaac. After decades of waiting for God to fulfill His promise to provide Abraham an heir, Abraham finally realized his dream when Isaac was born. But then, God issued a shocking command to Abraham: "Go and sacrifice [Isaac] as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you" (Genesis 22:2). It was the ultimate test of faith for Abraham and set the scene for an unforgettable, epochal event!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## An Aging Father and His Son

*Genesis 22:1–14*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to quiet your spirit and invite the Lord to minister to you through His Word. In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, we always pray for God’s Spirit to illumine our minds and hearts as we open God’s Word. As Chuck Swindoll advised, “Study without prayer is an incomplete process—a futile effort.”<sup>1</sup> You may wish to pray as Chuck prays before he studies the Word: “Lord, speak to me. Help me understand what this passage is saying. I am listening. I am sensitive to Your truth. Lead me into it.”<sup>2</sup>

Write your prayer here if you wish.



### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Genesis 22:1–14* slowly. Print the passage from the online Bible and underline what initially seems important, or use your cursor to highlight the sections on the screen. Note below any questions you may have.



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*Genesis 22:1–14*

### God's Command—Genesis 22:1–2

Notice how the author revealed God's perspective at the beginning of this account in Genesis 22:1. As you read, remember that you know more than the characters. Why do you think the author revealed God's intention to test Abraham?

How is Isaac described in 22:2? What did the author emphasize?

### Abraham's Response—Genesis 22:3–10

According to Genesis 22:3, how did Abraham respond to God's call? What details in this section indicate Abraham obeyed immediately?

The following six verses illustrate the depth of Abraham's faith that could only be described as *total abandonment* to God. What does the dialogue in Genesis 22:5–8 tell us about Abraham's confidence that God would intervene in some way (see especially Genesis 22:5, 8)?



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*Genesis 22:1–14*

Abraham's response was immediate, and his faith was solid, as he prepared for the sacrifice. Isaac, however, couldn't hold his tongue any longer; he asked his father, "Where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). Remember, Isaac didn't know what Abraham knew until Abraham placed him on the altar (22:8–10). In Genesis 22:9, it appears that Isaac let Abraham bind him with no resistance. What does Isaac's obedience reveal about Isaac's relationship with his father?

### **Heaven's Provision—Genesis 22:11–14**

The author of this Genesis passage repeated himself for emphasis. How many times did the angel call Abraham's name in Genesis 22:11? How many commands did the angel give to Abraham in 22:12? Do you see other repeated words or phrases in 22:13–14?

What was the outcome of God's test, according to 22:12? Also, notice the writer used the same description of Isaac in both 22:2 and 22:12.

Look at what the author stated at the end of 22:13 and Abraham's response in 22:14. By comparing these points to Abraham's statement in 22:8, we begin to cross the bridge from observation to interpretation.



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*Genesis 22:1–14*



### Interpretation: What Does This Story Mean?

Let's begin by looking up *burnt offering* (Genesis 22:2) in a Bible dictionary. If you're using the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, you'll find a helpful overview by looking under the entry for *sacrifice* and *sacrifice, human*. We also recommend exploring the NET Bible's notes on this passage at [Lumina](#) as well as Constable's Notes on this passage. How does a better understanding of *burnt offering* illuminate the meaning of God's command to Abraham to let go?

Now let's look up the term *Moriah* (22:2). Did any other significant biblical events happen at Mount Moriah? Next, let's look up *Yahweh Yireh* (or *Jehovah Jireh*). Some dictionaries place these terms under the heading "Names of God." The *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* contains the entry for *Jehovah Jireh* under *Lord Will Provide*. Note anything significant you find.

As we interpret the Bible, we look for what is important both historically and theologically. We understand the eternal nature of God in His actions with people through biblical history. We see Abraham's obedience in his response to God's command. What confidence does Abraham express in Genesis 22:5 and 22:8?



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*Genesis 22:1–14*

In Genesis 22:12, the angel told Abraham, “For now I know that you truly fear God.” In your own words, summarize what it means to fear God as illustrated by Abraham in Genesis 22:1–14.



### Correlation: Let’s Compare the Scriptures

Did you know the New Testament references this event concerning Abraham and Isaac? It’s found in [Hebrews 11:17–19](#). Take a moment to read this passage and make a few notes on how it contributes to our understanding of Genesis 22:1–14.

In complete obedience to God, Abraham released his precious son into the hands of God knowing that somehow God would provide for both of them. How about you? Are you as confident as Abraham that God will provide for you?



### Application: What Should I Let Go?

Every parent who has choked back tears on a child’s first day of school understands releasing. Every retiree who removed the last picture, taped shut the last box, and said the last goodbye understands releasing. Any who have felt their life savings slip through their fingers, any who have waved at a disappearing moving van, any who have taken a heart-wrenching walk past a coffin understand releasing too.



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Maybe you identify with some of these situations. In the space provided, describe a time when you had to release something or someone you dearly loved. Or perhaps you're still holding on and can't bring yourself to let go. What are the circumstances?

At the end of his sermon, Chuck made two profound statements:

- *God never puts us through a test without a purpose.* Usually, the purpose is designed to make us release what we're clutching.
- *When we trust God, He provides solutions that quickly loosen our grip.* The rewards of holding everything loosely will surpass anything we could have ever imagined.

As painful as it is to let go of God's good gifts, the process of releasing opens our hands to receive the greatest reward—the Giver Himself!

As we internalize this biblical account, let's anchor in our hearts the faithfulness of God who is our Provider. Centuries after Abraham released his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, our heavenly Father released His Son, Jesus Christ. Just as Isaac submitted himself to his father, so Jesus surrendered Himself to the altar of the cross. Only no lamb took Jesus' place, for Jesus was the Lamb! His sacrifice atoned for our sin, ushered us into an eternal relationship with our heavenly Father, and became the most epochal event of all.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for preserving this wonderful account of Your servant's faith and Your faithfulness. At this moment, I confess my temptation to cling to the things of this world because I believe the lie that life is better when I'm in control. Please increase my faith in You so that I may let go what needs to be released. Most of all, I thank You, Yahweh Yireh, for providing Your Son Jesus Christ as my sacrificial substitute so that I may have You as my portion forever. In Jesus' name, amen.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 128.
2. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures*, 128.
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 200.



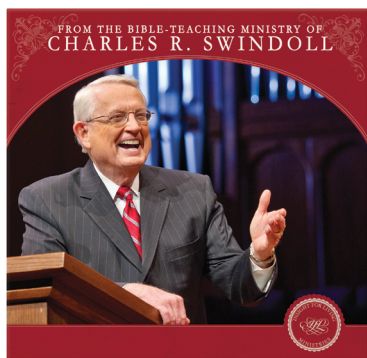


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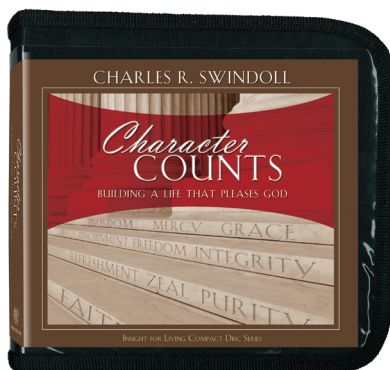
Genesis 22:1–14



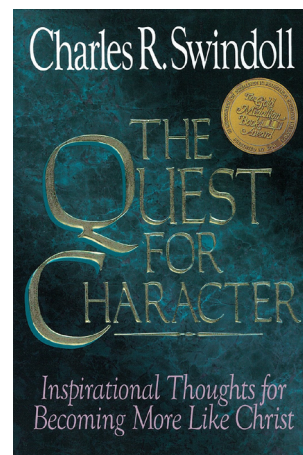
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

