

# The Promise



## SABBATH—MAY 14

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Genesis 22:1–12; Genesis 22:8, 14, 19; Genesis 23; Genesis 24; Genesis 24:67–Genesis 25:8.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Abraham lived to be a very old man. The LORD blessed him and everything he did” (Genesis 24:1, ERV).

**GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISE:** Sarah has a son. Abraham is an old man at the time (Genesis 21:2). Abraham names the baby Isaac (read Genesis 21:1–5). But the story of Abraham is not finished. Abraham takes Isaac, when he is grown, to the Mountain of Moriah. There, Abraham must give Isaac to God as a burnt offering. God replaces Isaac with a male sheep at the last minute (Genesis 22:13). The sheep is a word picture that shows us the saving plan of God. God wants to bless humans because of Isaac (Genesis 22:17, 18). That blessing, of course, is Jesus (Acts 13:23). This story shows us much Bible truth about the saving plan of God.

Sarah dies sometime after Isaac is offered to God (Genesis 23). Isaac has no wife at this time. Abraham is not sure how God will keep His promise about giving him many children. So, Abraham makes sure that the right future will happen.

Abraham commands his servant Eliezer to prepare a marriage for Isaac. Eliezer prepares a marriage for Isaac with Rebekah (Genesis 24). Rebekah will give Isaac two sons (Genesis 25:21–23). Abraham also gets married again. His new wife, Keturah, gives Abraham many children (Genesis 25:1–6). This week, we will read about Abraham, from Moriah to the end of his life (Genesis 25:7–11).



The sheep is a word picture that shows us the saving plan of God.

**ON THE MOUNTAIN OF MORIAH (Genesis 22:1–12)**

**What is the meaning of the test that God gives to Abraham? What spiritual lessons can we learn from this surprising story? For the answers, read Genesis 22:1–12 and Hebrews 11:17.**

God commands Abraham to give Him Isaac as a burnt offering. This command goes against an important Bible rule, right? God forbids His people to kill other humans and offer them as religious gifts to Him. So, why does God now test Abraham in this powerful and difficult way?

First, we must understand what a Bible test is. Then, we will better understand the answer to this difficult question. In the Bible, a test includes two parts or ideas. The first part of a Bible test is to show you what is in your heart (Deuteronomy 8:2; compare with Genesis 22:12). The second part of a Bible test shows the mercy of God to the person who takes the test (Exodus 20:18–20).

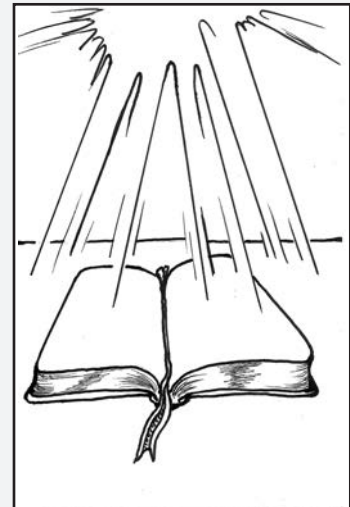
So, in this test, Abraham takes a risk. If Abraham gives up Isaac, Abraham will lose his “future” (that is, his future children that will be born to him because of Isaac). But Abraham trusts God, even if he does not understand the test. Faith means that we trust God, right? We trust God even when we can’t see or understand what is happening.

Bible faith is not about what we give to God. For sure, what we give to God is important (Romans 12:1). But Bible faith is really about our trust in God and accepting His mercy that we did nothing to earn.

We see this Bible truth in the story on the Mountain of Moriah. Look at all the good things that Abraham did in his life before this time. Abraham did many good works. He was kind and helped other people. Now he takes a trip to the Mountain of Moriah with his son. For sure, this trip causes Abraham to suffer as he thinks about what will happen to Isaac there. But none of these things are enough to save Abraham. Why? Because the Lord Himself gives a male sheep for the offering. This male sheep shows us the only way to be saved: Jesus.

This story also shows us the mercy of God for us. Our good behavior does not save us. Only the obedience of Jesus saves us (Ephesians 3:8; compare with Romans 11:33).

**What does this story about Abraham teach you about faith? How should we show faith?**



**Bible faith is really about our trust in God and accepting His mercy that we did nothing to earn.**

**GOD WILL GIVE US WHAT WE NEED**  
(Genesis 22:8, 14, 19)

**How does God keep His promise that He will give Abraham and Isaac what they need? What does God give them? For the answers, read Genesis 22:8, 14, 18.**



**Abraham turns and sees behind him the male sheep “whose horns were caught in a bush” of thorns (Genesis 22:13, ERV).**

Isaac asks his father where they will get the lamb needed for the offering. Abraham gives his son an interesting answer: “ ‘God himself will provide [bring] the lamb for the burnt offering, my son’ ” (Genesis 22:8, NIV). This verse also may be written as: “God will offer Himself as the Lamb.”

The answer of Abraham shows us what the saving plan of God is all about. The Lord Himself will suffer and pay the penalty for our sins!

**The story about Abraham and Isaac on the Mountain of Moriah shows us what will happen on the cross. Read John 1:1–3 and Romans 5:6–8. How do these verses help us understand what happened at the Cross?**

There, on the Mountain of Moriah, Abraham turns and sees behind him the male sheep “whose horns were caught in a bush” of thorns (Genesis 22:13, ERV). This male sheep shows us Jesus, who wore a crown made from thorns. Abraham sees Jesus in the word picture of this sheep, too. That is why “Abraham named that place ‘the LORD sees.’ That is the reason people today say, ‘On this mountain the LORD is seen’ ” (Genesis 22:14, CEB). Jesus Himself gives us proof that Abraham saw Him in the gift of the male sheep that day on the mountain. Jesus says, “ ‘Your father Abraham was filled with joy at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad’ ” (John 8:56, NIV).

“God commands Abraham to kill his son. Why does God give Abraham this difficult test? Because God wants to give Abraham a test of faith. God also wants to show Abraham His saving plan. Abraham suffers very much during this test. God allows Abraham to suffer so that Abraham will understand from his own experience how much God will give to us when He offers His Son to save us humans.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 154, adapted.

**How does this story about Abraham help us better understand what happened at the Cross?**

### SARAH DIES (Genesis 23)

In Genesis 22:23, we read that Rebekah is born. Rebekah is the future wife of Isaac (Genesis 24). In Genesis 23, we read that Sarah dies and is buried. Sometime after her death, Abraham marries Keturah (Genesis 25:1–4).

**What important parts do the death of Sarah and the place where she is buried have in the promise that God makes to Abraham? For the answer, read Genesis 23.**

---



---

Sarah dies sometime after Isaac comes back from the Mountain of Moriah. The Bible tells us that Sarah “lived to be 127 years old” (Genesis 23:1, ERV). Sarah is the only woman in the Old Testament whose age is written down in the Bible. This information shows us that Sarah is a very important person in the story about Abraham. She joined him on his travels. She was by his side, for better or for worse. She was part of his life when he failed to show faith from time to time (Genesis 12:11–13).

Most of Genesis 23 talks about the grave that Abraham bought for Sarah. This story talks more about the place where she is buried than about her death. The Bible tells us that Sarah dies in the land of Canaan (Genesis 23:2). Sarah is the first person from the family of Abraham who dies in the Promised Land and is buried there. So, the death of Sarah is connected with the Promised Land.

Abraham argues with the sons of Heth about the land that Abraham wants to buy as a grave for Sarah. This story shows us that Abraham is interested in far more than a place to bury his wife. Abraham is interested in making his home in the Promised Land forever.

**Read Genesis 23:6. What does this Bible verse tell us about how much people respected Abraham? Why is the respect and honor that other people showed Abraham so important to the plan that God had for Abraham and his life?**

---



In Genesis 23, we read that Sarah dies and is buried.

## A WIFE FOR ISAAC (Genesis 24)



The story about the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is filled with prayers and promises.

Genesis 23 tells us that Sarah dies. Genesis 24 tells us the story about how Isaac marries Rebekah. The death of Sarah is connected to the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.

**Why is Abraham worried about a wife for Isaac? Why does Abraham not want Isaac to marry a Canaanite woman? For the answers, read Genesis 24.**

Abraham trusts the promise of God. So, Abraham believes his future children will live in the Promised Land. That is why Abraham does not want Isaac to make his future home outside the Promised Land (Genesis 24:7). Also, Abraham does not want Isaac to marry someone who will turn his heart away from God. So, Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac from among the family group of Abraham. Isaac brings his bride into the tent of his mother Sarah. Isaac loves Rebekah “very much. So he was comforted after his mother’s death” (Genesis 24:67, ERV). We see from this story that Isaac is filled with pain and sorrow after his mother died.

The story about the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is filled with prayers and promises. From this beautiful story, we can learn many lessons about the loving-favor of God and about human freedom. Abraham asks his servant to swear an oath in the name of God: “ ‘The LORD is the God of heaven and the God of earth. I want you to make a promise to me in his name’ ” (Genesis 24:3, NIV). Do you see that Abraham believes that God is the One who made the skies and the earth (Genesis 1:1; Genesis 14:19)?

Next, Abraham talks about “ ‘the LORD, the God of heaven’ ” and “ ‘His angel’ ” (Genesis 24:7, ERV). These two names show us the Angel of the Lord who came from heaven to the Mountain of Moriah. He stopped Isaac from being killed (Genesis 22:11). This Angel is the same God who controls all life. He will lead the servant of Abraham to choose a bride for Isaac.

Abraham accepts that the woman may not choose to marry Isaac. Yes, God is all-powerful. But He does not force anyone to obey Him. Rebekah can say yes or no. God will respect her decision. So, we see in this story an example of the gift of free choice that God gives us.



**A WIFE FOR ABRAHAM (Genesis 24:67–Genesis 25:8)**

**Read in Genesis 24:67–Genesis 25:8 about the final happenings in the life of Abraham. What do these stories show us?**

After Sarah dies, Abraham marries again. His wife comforts him after the death of Sarah in the same way that Rebekah comforts Isaac (Genesis 24:67).

The name of the new wife of Abraham is Keturah. Who is Keturah? We are not really sure. The Bible talks about the sons of Keturah and Abraham in the same list as the sons of Hagar. So, it is possible that Hagar and Keturah may be the same person. Abraham sends the sons of Keturah away when they are grown, too, just as he sent Ishmael away. Abraham wants everyone to see that Isaac is the one who will get everything he owns when he dies.

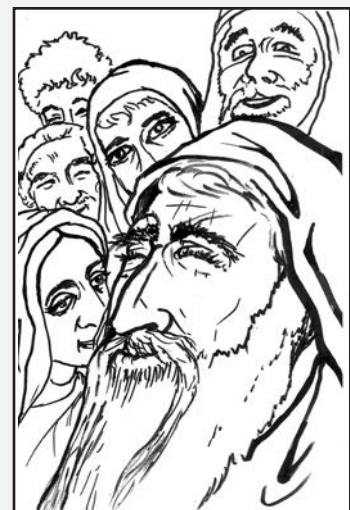
So, “Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines [wives who were less important than Sarah]. Then he sent them [the sons] away from his son Isaac. He sent them to the land of the east” (Genesis 25:5, 6, Nlrv). The word “concubines” shows us that Keturah was the same type of wife as Hagar, and not like Sarah.

In Genesis 25:1–4, 12–18, we see a list of the children that Abraham has with Keturah. We also see a list of the children of Ishmael. What is the reason for this list? No doubt this list is proof that God will keep His promise to Abraham: Abraham will be the father of many people groups.

The list of the sons of Ishmael is made of 12 family groups (compare with Genesis 17:20). Jacob also had 12 sons, who were the fathers of 12 family groups (Genesis 35:22–26). As we know, God will not make His agreement with Ishmael and his children. God will make His agreement only with the future children of Isaac (Genesis 17:21).

So, God keeps His promise to Abraham. God blesses him with many sons. God told Abraham many years before: “ ‘You will live many years, die in peace and be buried’ ” (Genesis 15:15, NLV; compare Ecclesiastes 6:3).

In the end, the Lord keeps His promises to His loyal servant Abraham. The Lord shows Abraham His loving-favor and mercy. In the Old Testament, Abraham is a wonderful example, maybe even the best example, of how God saves us. God saves us by His mercy when we believe in Him.



**God keeps His promise to Abraham. God blesses him with many sons.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Abraham was a special messenger from God. God shared His plans with Abraham (Genesis 18:17). God showed Abraham His plan to save humans by the death of His Son.

“Isaac is a word picture for Jesus, the Son of God. God will give Jesus as an offering for the sins of everyone on earth. God wants Abraham to understand the Good News about Jesus and how His saving plan works. So, God gives Abraham a test. God commands Abraham to kill his precious son, Isaac. Abraham suffers deeply during this test. God allows Abraham to suffer in this way for a reason. The pain and suffering from this experience will help Abraham understand the plan of God to save humans. Abraham learns how much God must give when He gives us His Son to save us from sin. Nothing else that Abraham experiences comes close to matching the suffering he feels when he obeys the command from God to kill Isaac.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 3, page 369, adapted.



**“Abraham wants his son to marry a woman who will not lead him from God.”**

“Abraham becomes an old man. He expects to die soon. But he needs to do one more thing before he dies. Then he will be sure that God can keep His promises to His future children. Abraham must find Isaac a wife. God chooses Isaac as the one to keep the knowledge of His law safe. God also chooses Isaac to be the father of the chosen people. The people of Canaan worship false gods. So, God does not allow His people to marry the Canaanites. God knows what will happen if His people marry the Canaanites. The Canaanites will lead His people to turn away from Him completely. . . . To Abraham, the choice of a wife for Isaac is very important business. Abraham wants his son to marry a woman who will not lead him from God. . . . Isaac trusts his father to choose the best wife for him. Isaac believes that God Himself will lead out in choosing a wife for him.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 171, adapted.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Abraham was willing to kill Isaac to please God. How much faith and strength do you think he needed to do that? What surprises you and troubles you about this story?
- ② What about your freedom to choose? Why must we have free choice as Christians? What examples do we have in the Bible about free choice? Sometimes people made the wrong choices. How do these stories show us that God worked out His saving plan for their lives anyway?

## TWO MEETINGS

I live in Ireland. My family lives in South Africa and a sister lives in Namibia. I visit them every year. On the airplane, I read the Bible, Ellen G. White books, and the Bible study guide. I also always put an extra copy of *Steps to Christ* in my travel bag. The books lead to interesting conversations with people. Every time I travel, something interesting happens.

During one of my trips, I talked with the man seated next to me. We were both waiting for our flight at the airport in Dublin, Ireland. I learned that the man was a special detective for the Irish police. The man traveled home to see his family in Cape Town, South Africa, every two to three months. We chatted about life while we waited to get on the plane. On the plane, a young woman sat beside me. She said, "I arrived late at the airport and almost missed getting on the plane! I am so stressed!"

"God knew you needed to get on this plane," I said.

I talked about how God controls our lives when we let Him.

Just before the plane took off, one of flight workers told the young woman that she was in the wrong seat. The young woman left and then the policeman sat down next to me. "Wow!" I said. "I believe God does things for a reason."

"You believe in God?" the man asked.

He asked me about my religion. I told him I was Seventh-day Adventist. "That is strange," he said. "My wife also is a Seventh-day Adventist. She has been trying for many years to get me to become an Adventist."

"I am happy to meet you," I said. And I was.

We talked about God's plan to save sinners. I gave him a copy of *Steps to Christ*. "My wife has been trying to get me to read this book," he said. "Now I will read it."

My two meetings were so surprising. I saw how God helped me to meet the police officer before we got on the plane. Then the police officer was ready for the book I gave him. I also talked about God to the woman who sat in the wrong seat. Ireland is not a very religious country. So, it is not easy to talk to people about God and being Christian. But God gave me two chances to talk about Him before the plane took off!

This mission story shows two parts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" plan: Church Growth Task No. 2 and Spiritual Growth Task No. 5. Church Growth Task No. 2 is: "We will help make the Adventist Church grow strong in new ways in large cities. We will share Jesus with people who do not know Him." Spiritual Growth Task No. 5 is: "We will help people and families live more Spirit-filled lives." This story also shows the Holy Spirit Task: "We will allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and show us God's plan for our lives." Read more: [IWillGo2020.org](http://IWillGo2020.org).

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by THEDA PIENAAR



I also always put an extra copy of *Steps to Christ* in my travel bag.

