

**Genesis 22:1–19**

If you want to really fascinate a child (or even an adult) with a great story, one of the best ways is to make them a **character** in a story. Nearly a hundred years ago, a little boy in England was really taken with a small black bear at the London Zoo. The bear had been found as an orphaned cub and accompanied his owner Captain Harry Colebourn during WWI to England where he then stayed in the zoo. Soon after, his father, a playwright and novelist began writing stories that featured the little boy, his bear and other toys in the boy's playroom as characters. You know the bear as Winnie (Winnipeg) -the-Pooh. You know the boy as Christopher Robin (a.k.a. Robin Milne).

A. A. Milne's stories have been loved by generations of children, translated into more than fifty languages, but it all began with a little boy and a bear as characters in a simple story.

**Everyone here today has a story.** I do... You do. Some read like drama, some like comedies. Some are mysteries, or adventure, and others are romances. Some are much **longer** than others, and some are just getting started. Some need some new chapters and excitement! But all of our stories, different as they are, are part of a **bigger** story: A story that is older than any of us, a story that defines all of us, and will guide us, too. It is the story told in the pages of your Bible, from its beginning to its end. It is the message of some of those Bible stories that will occupy our attention for the next few Sunday mornings. We will follow some of the most inspiring and powerful Bible stories, which present the vast variety and sweeping scope of the Bible as a **unified whole**, with a consistent theme, the history of redemption!

My hope is that at the end of this four-week series you will: 1) **See** these stories from the Bible *differently* than you have seen them before; 2) Gain a better **appreciation** for God's *redemptive* plan through Jesus Christ; and 3) Experience a greater **insight** into God's *love* for you.

Bible— stories are unique in that they are **more** than just stories (history); they are stories that tell us something about ourselves, our lives, and God's hopes and plans for us. And the story we

will start with today is an amazing incident found in the **first** book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, chapter 22. This is sometimes called “The Binding of Isaac.” First, we’ll look at it on video, and then turn in our Bibles to study it in greater detail: [View video clip: The Binding of Isaac](#),

This is from The Bible miniseries produced for the History channel, a couple of years ago...

It is a story of great faith, the story of a **father** who was so obedient to God that he was willing to make the greatest sacrifice imaginable. It is a story usually told from **Abraham’s** perspective, as a display of his great faith.

**But have you ever looked at it from Isaac’s perspective?** That’s how we will approach it today. And it is not just Isaac’s story; it can be a story for all of us in at least **three** very important ways. The first way that Isaac’s story is my story is this:

1. **My life is an uncertain journey** (Genesis 22:1–8). Genesis 22, verses 1–8, says this:

*Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”*

*“Here I am,” he replied.*

*Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”*

*Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”*

*Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and 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 went on together (NIV).***

We’ll try to put ourselves in Isaac’s sandals today. Apparently one day his father told him they were going for a trip ... a father-son trip to Mt. Moriah, with two servants. It was a trip of about **fifty miles** from Beersheba where they were living. They traveled for two days, reaching their destination on the third day. The Bible doesn’t tell us how much Isaac knew in advance, if anything. While artistic depictions and the clip we just watched depict Isaac as **a boy**, he was likely a young man at the time. In any case, it is clear that there was much Isaac didn’t understand. There was much that hadn’t been revealed to him. There was much that was a mystery. That is true of your life and mine. We are all on a journey— an *uncertain* journey. We don’t know what lies ahead.

The author of Ecclesiastes said, ***“No man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him?”*** (Ecclesiastes 10:14b, ESV).

No matter how much you have figured out, your life, like mine, *is an uncertain journey*.

That’s one way in which Isaac’s story is my story, and yours, too. But there is another way in which his story is true of each of us, and that is:

2. **Our death appears certain** (Genesis 22:9–10). Look at the text again. Genesis 22: 9-10 ***“When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”*** (NIV)

Can you imagine? Again, put yourself in *Isaac’s* shoes. Can you imagine his amazement, his astonishment, his horror? Whether he was **eight** years old or **eighteen**, this had to have been a frightful moment. Did his father surprise him? Did Abraham explain what had to happen? Did Isaac resist? It seems likely that, at some point, Isaac figured out what was happening. At some point, he realized that his death was certain. The text does supply this excruciating detail: Abraham raised the knife to “slay” his son!

Talk about your life flashing before your eyes! Some of us have had such a moment. Maybe it was a health scare. Maybe it was a car accident or an operation. But Isaac's story is your story, and mine, regardless. The Bible says in Romans 5:12 ***"Sin came into the world because of what one man did, and with sin came death. This is why everyone must die—because everyone sinned"*** (Romans 5:12, NCV).

Since the fall of man... we have all gone astray. We have all rejected God's way and chosen our own way ... repeatedly. And the awful consequence of the sin that touches us all is the death. It's true. You have never been tied hand and foot and placed on an altar and the angel of death may not be sweeping through your house tonight. *But death is coming for us all, one way or another, sooner or later.*

Doesn't need to be depressing. Hold on..., it gets better. Before we can truly appreciate the **good news**, though, we need to understand the **bad news**. Every one among us is facing physical death, just like Isaac did on the altar; it's not a question of **if** death is coming, it is only a question of **when**.

But, happily, that is not the end of **the story**. Or, at least, it doesn't have to be. Because there is one more way that Isaac's story is my story, and it is this:

3. **My salvation has been provided** (Genesis 22:11–14). Let's look one more time at the text. Remember, Abraham has bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar. He has lifted the knife to kill his son. And then Genesis 22: 11–14, says this:

***"But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"***

***"Here I am," he replied.***

***"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."***

***Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided"*** (NIV).

Can you imagine the relief? For Abraham, certainly—but once again, **put yourself in Isaac's shoes**. The knife was raised. He probably closed his eyes and braced himself.

And then ... the angel of the Lord spoke up, and told Abraham to **Stop!** And the next thing you know, a ram appeared, tangled in a bush nearby. A sheep. A sacrificial animal. A substitute. And Isaac was rescued! This is the first time in scripture that a substitutionary Sacrifice appears... it is a clear foreshadowing of Christ and his substitution.

This is designed to be a chapter in your story too. You may not be physically bound, hand and foot, but like all of us, you know the shackles of sin. You might even know that the Bible says,

***The wages of sin is death*** (Romans 6:23)

But your story doesn't end there, any more than Isaac's story ended on Mt. Moriah. Because just as he did for Isaac, God provided salvation for *you* ... a substitute. A Lamb. In prophetic fulfillment of a promise, that's what John the Baptist meant when he saw Jesus by the Jordan River, and announced to everyone:

***"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (John 1:29)

God provided a Lamb for all of us. For me. For you.

So, **put yourself in Isaac's shoes**—or sandals—one last time today.

Can you picture him climbing *down* from that altar? Do you imagine that he casually wiped his brow and said, "Whew! That was close"? Or do you, like me, imagine that he dropped to his knees in tearful gratitude for the salvation God provided? Do you think that's the kind of response that would be appropriate for us today?

If you have never personally thanked God for this provision and received it, do you think you could pray a simple prayer? I invite you to pray with me now:

***"Lord God, thank you for providing for my rescue/forgiveness/salvation. Thank you for the perfect Son of God, who was given to take away the sin. I confess that I am a sinner. I need to turn to you, and accept Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as payment for all the wrong that I've***

***done. I ask you to come into my life, and take charge from this moment on, in Jesus' name, amen."***

Now, if you've prayed that prayer, the Bible says you have passed from death into life and will live forever in the love of God in Christ.

Is the journey uncertain? We trust God when we can't see what's *around the corner!*

Is your earthly life flashing before your eyes? **1 John 5:11, 12** "This is the record. God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the son has eternal life and he who does not have the son does not have eternal life."

How has the substitution of Christ become a part of your story? What chapter number is it?

And for all of us, let's pray together:

***"Lord God, thank you for your great salvation. Help us—each one—to live in gratitude and constant awareness of our deliverance from sin, and guilt, and death, in Jesus' name, amen."***