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Bible Lesson 8 (BTJ)

1. Introduction

God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son. They waited many years for God to fulfill this promise. Then it happened just as God had promised. Abraham and Sarah had a son whom they named Isaac. He was the heir of Abraham through whom the Deliverer would come. Though Abraham and Sarah waited a long time for Isaac, he was born at the right time according to God's plan.

Ishmael was already a young teenage boy at the time of Isaac's birth. Abraham loved Ishmael however he was not the promised heir according to God's plan. Sarah did not want Ishmael to be around Isaac so he asked that Abraham send Ishmael and his mother, Hagar, away. Though a hard thing for Abraham to do, he sent them away because it was God's plan. This is another example of Abraham's obedience to the Lord even though it was hard for him. His example of obeying God is a good one to us to follow.

Abraham's faith in God was tested in a more pronounced way when God told him to offer up Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Abraham did not argue with God about having to offer Isaac. He obeyed God's command because he believed in God. On the way to the place where Isaac was to be offered, Abraham's faith did not waver though undoubtedly it was tried. God intervened and provided a substitute ram which was offered in Isaac's place.

The story of Abraham offering Isaac is filled with rich meanings. The focus of the story is how God worked in this event and provided a substitute to die in Isaac's place. By God's power, he caused the ram to be caught in a nearby thicket by his horns. Though it had not sinned against God, it died in the place of Isaac. Isaac, however, was spared and lived. Isaac did not do some good deed which obligated God to spare his life. God showed mercy and grace to Isaac and provided the ram to be offered in Isaac's place. Isaac's life was spared because God exercised his mercy and grace to him.

2. Review

Setting: Teacher was preparing the ground for his new vegetable garden. Some of the villagers asked, “Teacher, what are you doing?”

Teacher: I am making my garden larger. This new part here will be for vegetables for my family. I am digging up the ground, taking out the weeds, brush and vines that cover the ground. I want it to be free from weeds so that the vegetables I plant will grow well and produce plenty of food for my family. Would the vegetables grow well if grass, weeds and brush also grew in this ground?

Anne: No, of course not. We always burn off the trash and prepare the ground before planting our gardens. Otherwise the weeds will crowd out the good seeds that we plant. We have to keep weeding our gardens or the weeds will grow over our sweet potatoes and other crops. It is a lot of hard work to keep the garden free from weeds.

Teacher: You spoke about weeds preventing good food from growing in your gardens. How does that relate to the teaching you are hearing? Is there a lesson about gardening that applies to the Bible stories that you are hearing?

Anne: Teacher, I want to tell you something about us. When you teach us, we learn so much and think, “This new teaching is true.” Later, the old beliefs want to come back to us and rule us again.

Teacher: Explain to me what you mean. How do the old beliefs want to come back and control you?

Anne: Here is an example of what I am saying. You taught us how God created everything by his power and spoken word. I believe that is true. I believe that God created all the plants that provide food for us. He alone is the owner and controller of everything. Even though I believe this, when I planted my last garden, the old ways of first doing magic on the garden wanted to control my thoughts. I said, “No, I am not doing magic on my garden because I believe God is the owner and controller of my garden.” Later the old ways kept saying, “You will only have a little food to eat because you did not do magic on your garden before you planted it.” The old ways are like weeds wanting to come back and control me. The old ways which I have rejected want to take over again!

Teacher: Your thinking is good! What do you have to do when that happens? What do you do when weeds start to grow again in your garden?

Anne: When weeds grow in our gardens, we pull them out again and again. Finally things that we planted are big enough to overtake the weeds that still try to grow. If we give up, the weeds will overtake the garden.

Teacher: How does that apply to your situation of the old ways trying to get you to turn away from the Bible's teachings?

Anne: We have to keep rejecting the old lies we used to believe and practice just like we have to keep pulling weeds. If we continue to turn away from the old ways, our faith and trust in God's message will grow big and strong. But if we lust for the old ways it is like letting weeds grow in our gardens. I believe all that Teacher is teaching us. I want God to help me and save me from my sins.

Teacher: You have answered well. This discussion has been very good. It is good for you to talk about these things. It is right that you choose God over the old ways. Do some people disagree with you when you choose God's truth over the old ways?

Anne: My sister from another village scolded me for listening to your teaching. She said, "Have not our ways worked for us? Did not the offerings and sacrifices we give to our deities work?" I said, "My sister, this teaching is truth. We are learning about the only true God. I cannot turn my back on this new teaching because it is true. I wish you too would believe in this teaching."

Teacher: Who else doesn't want you to believe God's message? Is there someone else who fights against God and his truth? Is there someone else who wants you to disbelieve God's message? Who might that be?

Anne: Satan doesn't want us to believe the Bible stories. He hates God and fights against the truth you teach us. He wants us to be like Cain and just live the way we always lived. Whenever your talk convicts me, Satan wants me to be like Cain. I have chosen to believe God's message for us. I will not be like Cain.

Teacher: I am glad to hear you say that. Satan hates all the good things that are happening here in this village. God, however, is delighted to see you believe his message. He wants to save you from the and penalty of your sins. God is good and he loves you.

Anne: You have taught us about the wickedness of the people in Noah's time. Then about Nimrod's rebellion against God and his desire to make a name for himself. God judged Nimrod and those who followed him for their wickedness. This teaching has convicted me that I too am a sinner. I need God's mercy and grace so that I will not die separated

from God. As for me, I have chosen to believe in God. I have talked much to my family and my parents about this new teaching. All of us really want to hear more about God. We want him to forgive us for living sinfully. Please continue to teach us.

Teacher: It is important to believe everything I have taught you. There is more to be learned about God and his perfect ways so please keep coming to the meetings.

Anne: All of us lived in sin all our lives. We were as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God destroyed them with fire and brimstone. Many of us have not slept well since you taught us that story. We know that we are guilty and deserve to be destroyed just as much as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah did.

Teacher: It is good that you admit your sinfulness. Unless you admit being sinners, God will not show mercy and grace to you.

Anne: This morning, I saw the sunrise and I thought, “God is being merciful to us even though we do not deserve his mercy.” I believe God withheld his judgment so that we could turn to him and believe this good message you are teaching us. God has been merciful to us and spared us. I know he wants all of us to believe in him.

Teacher: I am very glad to hear you say that you believe the Bible stories. It is the right thing to do. It is right for you to believe in God. You have rightly concluded that you too deserve death because of your sinfulness. It is true that God is being merciful to you because he wants to save you from your guilt and the penalty of your sin. He wants you to be in a right relationship with him. He wants you to worship him and bring glory and honor to his name.

3. Isaac Is Born

Setting: Now it is time to teach you another story from the Bible. I am very glad to see all of you here again to learn more about God through his important message for us.

Before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, he appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre. At that time, the Lord promised Abraham that about a year later, Sarah would give birth to his son. Both Abraham and Sarah were old at that time. Sarah had never given birth to a child when she was younger because she was not able to do so.

Sarah overheard the Lord tell Abraham that she was going to give birth to a son and laughed to herself saying. “How can an old woman, like me, give birth to a son?” The Lord knew that Sarah was wondering how she would give birth at such an old age so

again he said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” God wanted Abraham to know that he would use his power and cause Abraham and Sarah to have a son. God is all-knowing so he knew Sarah’s thoughts even though she had not spoken them to anyone.

Earlier God had promised Abraham that he would have many descendants. However, they did not have any children. Do you think it is possible for Sarah to have a baby at such an old age? Why do you think God waited until Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children before he decided it was time to fulfill his promise? Remember, God never does anything bad. All his ways are right. God promised that Sarah and Abraham would have a son so it had to happen. Everything God says comes to pass just like he said it will. God does not make empty promises. All he says is truth. He is reliable and trustworthy all the time.

After Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed God exercised his power over Sarah and she became pregnant just like he had promised. Though she was old and had never given birth to a child, now she was pregnant with the child God had promised. Remember this: God is not like people who make empty promises. All of God’s promises will be fulfilled. God is truth which means he cannot make empty promises or speak foolishly.

A year after Sarah heard the Lord promise a son to Abraham and herself, she had a baby boy. When Sarah gave birth to their son, Abraham was 100 years old. Now they had a son and they were so happy! Their son was born just like God had promised. Abraham named their son Isaac. Sarah rejoiced and said, “God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!” Abraham and Sarah were very happy. Isaac’s birth happened exactly as God had promised. Then eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him according to God’s command.

Think about this story. It teaches us again that God does not change. He always fulfills his promises in his time. Everything he commands happens just like he commanded it. Do you always do everything you say you will do? Do any of us always follow through with our plans? No, as people sometimes we say something which we plan to do but later are unable to do. Sometimes we forget what we have said. Sometimes we get sick and cannot do what we want to do. God is not like that. He does everything he promises at the right time. He will never change. He will never lie. He always speaks the truth and all that he commands to be happens.

4. Ishmael Sent Away

Abraham and Sarah took good care of their son Isaac, their special baby boy. Every day they were reminded of God's wonderful ways. God gave them the promised son in their old age. He blessed them in a special way according to his promise. Now they were very happy to have a descendant.

When Isaac was weaned, Abraham made a feast to celebrate God's goodness to them. Isaac was growing up. He was the promised son. He was so special to them and they loved him very much. At the time of the feast, Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar, was mocking Isaac. Perhaps he was teasing him or laughing at him because his parents were so old.

Sarah saw Ishmael's naughtiness and was very upset. She said to Abraham, "You must get rid of that slave-woman and her son right now! They must leave this place. They must move away from here. Ishmael cannot remain here. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I will not allow it!" Abraham heard Sarah's demand and was distressed by it. After all, Ishmael was his son and he had grown very fond of him. By now Ishmael was a young teenager who was affectionately cared for by Abraham. Abraham loved Ishmael and the thought of sending him away was too much. Sarah's demand was displeasing to Abraham.

Abraham pondered the situation in distress. "What shall I do? I know Isaac is the son of promise, but, Ishmael is also my son. Sarah has demanded that Ishmael leave because he cannot share in my inheritance. What shall I do?" In distress Abraham wrestled with this issue because he cared a lot for Ishmael. On the other hand, he knew that Isaac was the special son of promise. God had chosen Isaac to be Abraham's descendant through whom the Deliverer would come.

God saw Abraham's anguish and said to him, "Do not be upset over Ishmael, your son, and Hagar, your servant. Listen to Sarah and do whatever Sarah tells you to do. Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. He is the son of promise, not Ishmael." God said these things to Abraham so that he would know that it was right to send Ishmael and Hagar away.

What do you think? Will Abraham send Ishmael away? Listen to what happened next.

Abraham heard what God had said to him. He did not waste any time obeying God. Early, the next morning, Abraham got up and prepared food and a container of water for Hagar and Ishmael. He strapped these provisions on Hagar's shoulders and sent her away with Ishmael, their son. No doubt Abraham felt much pain as he saw Ishmael go away from

him. However, he was not the son of promise so he could not be Abraham's heir.

God did not abandon Hagar and Ishmael. He took care of them on their journey away from Abraham. God was with Ishmael as he grew up in the wilderness. Ishmael became a skillful archer, and settled in the wilderness of Paran. When he was grown, his mother Hagar arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

Now that Ishmael was gone from Abraham, the story of Abraham will include Isaac, the son of promise, as an important character. He was the promised one who was to receive an inheritance from Abraham. He was the promised descendant through whom the Deliverer would come according to God's plan. Ishmael, however, was not the son of promise and could not share in the inheritance.

5. Isaac Offered

After Ishmael was gone, Abraham devoted his attention to Isaac, the son whom God had promised to Abraham and Sarah. They loved him very much and took good care of him. Isaac continued to grow and mature as a young man. Some time later God tested Abraham.

"Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am."

God said to Abraham. "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you." Abraham heard all that God had spoken to him. He understood clearly what God wanted him to do. He was supposed to go to the land of Moriah and sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering on top of one of the mountains there.

What will Abraham do? Abraham loved Isaac very much just like we love our children. Isaac was the son God had promised to him and Sarah whom they dearly loved. But now Abraham was commanded by God to offer him up as a burnt sacrifice! How do you think Abraham will respond to this command?

Listen carefully to this story about Abraham's response to God's command. Abraham heard God's command so he decided to obey him. Abraham did not wait to obey God. He did not spend hours fretting about what God commanded him to do. He did not get angry at God.

The next morning Abraham got up early so he could be obedient to God's command. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. The donkey was used to carry things for them as they traveled on their journey to the land of Moriah. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the land of Moriah to the place which God had told him. Abraham, Isaac and his servants traveled to the land of Moriah. On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw in the distance the place where he was to offer up Isaac.

"Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "Isaac and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back." The servants obeyed Abraham's command and stayed at that place with the donkey. Now Isaac knew that just he and his father Abraham would continue their journey together to worship God.

Abraham took the wood that he had prepared for a burnt offering from the donkey and placed it on Isaac's shoulders. "Carry this wood as we continue our journey," instructed Abraham. Abraham took the fire and the knife which would be used for the sacrifice and carried them as the two of them set off to the place which God had shown Abraham.

As the two of them walked along, Isaac noticed that they did not have an animal with them to sacrifice to the Lord. By now, he knew that sheep were used for burnt offerings as a sacrifice to God. "What's going on here?" Isaac wondered. "Didn't we forget the sheep?" Isaac turned to Abraham, his father, and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"Look here," said Isaac, "we have the fire and the wood. But, where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" Isaac was puzzled. How could they have forgotten to bring a sheep for the burnt offering!

"God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. Isaac heard Abraham's reply and had no more questions. He knew that his father trusted God and he trusted his father. They continued walking along together to the place where they would worship God.

When they arrived at the place that God had designated, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood upon it. "Where is the sheep?" Isaac must have wondered as he watched Abraham make preparations for the sacrifice. Though he remembered his father's statement, "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering" he wondered, "Where is this sheep which God will provide for the burnt offering?"

Let's talk about this story before I teach you the ending. Do you think Abraham will actually kill Isaac and offer him up as a burnt offering? Will he obey God's command to sacrifice Isaac or not? Was Abraham truly a man who believed all that God spoke or not?

At this point in history, Abraham knew that God had said Isaac was the son of promise. Abraham knew that through a descendant of his all the families of the earth would be blessed. How could that happen if he struck Isaac with his knife and sacrificed him as a burnt offering? If Abraham killed Isaac, the only promised son, how would God fulfill his promise to send the Deliverer, as a descendant of this son?

Listen carefully to the rest of this story. Abraham tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. Remember, at this time Isaac was a strong, young man who could have easily defended himself against Abraham. The Bible doesn't tell us whether or not Abraham explained everything to Isaac. The Bible teaches us that Abraham tied Isaac and laid him on top of the wood on the altar in the same manner as all burnt offerings were done.

With Isaac bound, lying on top of the altar on the wood, Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. Will Abraham actually strike him or not?

Abraham grasped the knife in his hand and positioned to strike

Isaac without knowing how

everything would end. At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

"Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son." With great relief Abraham obeyed the Lord. He did not strike Isaac.

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. Abraham took



Show #18: Abraham offering Isaac

Isaac off the altar and loosened him. God had spared Isaac's life! Then Abraham went to the ram caught in the thicket and sacrificed it to God as a burnt offering in place of his son. Isaac stood by and saw everything that happened there. In his place, the ram died, its blood flowed out on the ground and it was offered to the Lord as a burnt offering. But, Isaac did not die. He lived. No longer was there a death sentence upon him. The requirement of the death sentence had been fulfilled by the ram being sacrificed in his place.

What did Abraham think after all this happened? What was going on in his mind? Moments before he was about to strike Isaac but then God intervened and spared Isaac's life. Was his faith in God strengthened through this experience?

Remember this: Earlier when Abraham and Isaac were walking up the mountain, Isaac had asked him, "Where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" At that moment in history Abraham fully trusted God in everything. He believed in God without reservation and so he replied, "God himself will provide a sheep for the offering." Abraham was not guessing about what God would do. Nor did he know exactly what would be the outcome of his obedience to God. Abraham simply obeyed God because he knew that God is always trustworthy. He knew that through Isaac the promised Deliverer would come.

After the ram was sacrificed to God as a burnt offering, Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide. He did this because God provided the ram as a substitute for Isaac. It died in Isaac's place. Isaac's life was spared because God showed mercy and grace to him when he was without a way to save himself from being sacrificed. The principle of substitution, God's way, is seen clearly in this historical event.

Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering? God was testing Abraham to see whether or not he would obey God in everything. Would he obey God or not? Even though God knows everything and knew what Abraham would do, he wanted Abraham to experience this test. It was a very hard test. Abraham did not fail the test because he believed in God who gave him this hard test. Abraham knew that God would not abandon him but be true to his promises.

Abraham and Isaac were still at the place of testing on a mountain in the land of Moriah. Then the angel of the LORD called to him again from heaven. The angel said, "This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed, all because you have obeyed me."

God was pleased with Abraham's trust in him. Why did Abraham trust God? Abraham trusted God because he knew that God is always trustworthy. God cannot change. God promised to greatly bless Abraham because he obeyed him in everything. He gave Isaac to God, but God spared Isaac according to his plan. Abraham did not know how God would spare Isaac, yet, he trusted God and followed God's orders. God was pleased with Abraham's response and restated his promise to make his descendants very great in number. He would have so many descendants that it would be impossible to count them. God promised to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's descendants.

6. The Principle of Substitution

When Isaac was on top of the altar, he was bound so that he could not move. He could not do anything to save himself from death. Almighty God had placed a sentence of death upon Isaac though Isaac did not know it.

As Abraham was ready to strike Isaac, the angel of the Lord called to him and told him to not strike Isaac. Abraham, positioned to kill Isaac, quickly obeyed the angel's voice. Then he saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. Quickly Abraham went to the ram, killed it and offered it to God as a burnt offering in the place of Isaac.

Did the ram sin against God? No, it was just a ram, an animal, one of God's creation. It had not sinned against God. It had not listened to Satan's lies. It had not lied to anyone nor stolen anyone's property. It had not committed adultery. It had not worshiped idols. Why did it have to die? Could not Isaac have been released and his life spared without the ram having to die?

Think about this: What is the payment for sin? The payment for sin is death. Do you remember God's words to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God said, "If you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die." There is a death sentence upon all who sin because sin's payment is death. Does everyone sin? Yes, everyone sins and deserves to be put to death.

When God spoke the death sentence upon Isaac, it meant either Isaac would die or a substitute would die in his place. Did Abraham know that God was going to provide a substitute for Isaac? No, he did not know that beforehand. He only knew that God wanted him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. So Abraham proceeded to do as God commanded him.

What did God do to spare Isaac's life? God intervened and provided a ram which was

caught in a nearby thicket. Abraham got the ram and sacrificed it as burnt offering to God. The ram died in the place of Isaac. Remember: Sin's payment is death. Either each sinner will pay for his sins by his own death or an acceptable substitute will take his place. Either the guilty one will die or an acceptable substitute will die in the place of the guilty one.

Just like Isaac could not save himself from death, neither can people save themselves from the penalty of sin. Everyone dies. No person can save himself from the penalty of sin. If Isaac had tried to plan a way of escape, he would have failed. If he had tried to find his own substitute, God would have rejected it. God showed mercy to Isaac. By his grace he provided the substitute for Isaac.

God paid the debt which Isaac owed but could not pay. God was not indebted to Isaac. God showed mercy and favor to Isaac because he wanted him to live. God provided the sin payment of an acceptable substitute so that Isaac would live. God's mercy and grace are great, too wonderful for us to fully understand. God wants you to believe this message so that he will be merciful to you and save you from the guilt and the penalty of your sins.

Remember this: Just as Isaac could not free himself and come off the altar, no one can free himself from sin's penalty. God showed mercy and grace to Isaac and he lived. God provided a substitute ram to die in the place of Isaac. God saw the death of the ram in the place of Isaac and allowed Isaac to live.

This historical event shows us that unless God provides a way for people to be saved, they will die in their sins. It also teaches that God's provision of a substitute is the way for sinners to be saved from paying for their own sins. Who will pay for your sins? Will it be the death and the blood of a substitute or will you pay for them in the never-ending fire of punishment? God wants you to have faith in him and the way he has provided for people to be saved.

Teacher: Please continue to come to the meetings to learn more about God and how to be saved. God wants you to know him personally. He wants to save you. He will save you if you believe in him. It is good that you talk with each other about the Bible stories and help each other understand them. Remember, God loves you and he wants you to trust him, to believe in him alone.

If anyone does not want you to believe in God, do not listen to that person. God wants to help you and save you from your sin's guilt and penalty. God loves you and he wants you

to be reconciled to him. Remember this: God will only save those who come to him in his way.

7. After the Meeting

Setting: After the meeting, many people were thinking about the story of Abraham and Isaac. “How could someone be willing to sacrifice their only son?” was in the back of their minds.

Patrick: Today we learned more about Abraham. He was a man who believed whatever God said. He made the right choice to believe in God and to worship him.

Twila: That’s true. For many years Abraham and Sarah did not have any children. Both of them were old when God promised that they would have a son. Abraham believed God’s promise even though there was no evidence for it to happen. When the Lord appeared to Abraham at the oak grove at Mamre, he said within a year, Sarah would have a son and Sarah laughed. Was she doubting God’s promise?

Patrick: I think Sarah believed God. However, she was a person just like us. Sometimes we hear something extraordinary and have a hard time believing it even though we know it is true.

Twila: How did the Lord know she laughed to herself if she didn’t laugh out loud?

Patrick: God knows everything. Even if we do not say what we are thinking, he knows our thoughts, all of them. Do you ever think about things you do not tell others? God knows all those thoughts whether they are good or bad. He knows everything.

Twila: Teacher taught us about Sarah having a baby when she was very old. That never happens today so how could it have happened to Sarah a long time ago?

Patrick: Do you remember how God spoke and created everything by his commands? Think about it this way. God made everything from nothing. Everything we have came from God. He created everything. The power of God which created everything from nothing was able to do a miracle in Sarah’s body and she became pregnant.

Twila: Why did Hagar and Ishmael have to leave Abraham and Sarah? Abraham was Ishmael’s father and he loved Ishmael very much.

Patrick: Ishmael was Abraham’s son but his mother was Hagar. That means he was not the promised son. God said Abraham and Sarah would have a son and he would be

Abraham's heir. When Sarah saw Ishmael's behavior toward Isaac, she did not want him to be around Isaac. She feared that Ishmael's behavior would influence Isaac to misbehave. Sarah wanted her son Isaac to grow up and be a man who trusted God like Abraham did. God told Abraham that sending Hagar and Ishmael away was the right thing to do.

Twila: If God knows everything, why did he test Abraham? Did he not know that Abraham would obey him and sacrifice Isaac?

Patrick: God knows everything. He knew what Abraham would do. When Abraham went through this test, he was faced with choices. Either he would trust God or he would doubt God. Going through this test taught Abraham a lot about the necessity of always believing God. God wanted Abraham to go through the test and face the pressure of making the right choice of obeying God.

Twila: When Abraham and Isaac were going up the mountain to the place God showed Abraham, did Isaac know that he would be sacrificed?

Patrick: No, Isaac did not know that God had commanded his father to sacrifice him as a burnt offering. He was an obedient son so he followed his father's instructions. When he mentioned that they did not have a sheep, Abraham said, "God will provide a sheep." I think Abraham believed God would do a miracle and provide a sheep for the offering.

Twila: When Abraham placed Isaac on top of the wood on the altar the story was a bit scary for me. Why didn't Isaac struggle to free himself?

Patrick: I do not know why he didn't struggle against Abraham. I think Isaac knew that his father would not act foolishly because he trusted God in everything. Isaac trusted his father in the same way that he saw Abraham trust God. Isaac knew that this father loved him very much.

Twila: Abraham named the place where he offered Isaac 'The LORD Will Provide' because God provided a substitute sacrifice for Isaac who could not save himself from death. The ram died in the place of Isaac. It was sacrificed as a burnt offering to God and Isaac lived. God withheld death from Isaac and gave him his favor so that he lived.

Patrick: It is very important that we understand the story about the ram taking the place of Isaac. When God told Abraham that he should sacrifice Isaac, a death sentence was placed upon Isaac. He could not save himself. All of us have sinned and have a death sentence upon us. I cannot save myself because I am a sinner. None of you, my family,

can do anything to save yourselves from death. We need God's mercy or we will pay for our own sins.

Twila: God provided a ram to take the place of Isaac. I wonder, what will God do to provide a substitute for us? We cannot find our own substitute, can we? God rejected Cain's offering because he did it his own way. What will take our place so that we will not have to pay for your own sins?

Patrick: As I have listened to all of the Bible stories, I have noticed the principle of substitution occurring over and over. Adam and Eve did not die in the Garden of Eden. God covered them with animal skins and they lived. Abel did not die upon his own altar; a lamb was sacrificed in his place and he lived. Isaac did not die upon the altar as a burnt offering to God; a ram was offered in his place. I think God will provide something or someone who will take our place and die for us. Let's think about this and ask Teacher about this at our next meeting.

8. Review of the Lesson's Themes

God is faithful all the time. He does not change: Emphasize the faithfulness of God which is constant. God does not change. This sets him apart from false gods who are not reliable. They are false and fickle.

God is omnipotent: Humanly speaking, it was impossible for Sarah to become pregnant. Emphasize that with God, all things are possible. Just as he spoke and created material from nothing, so too could he create life in the body of an old, barren woman.

God is sovereign and supreme: God's choice for Isaac to be the son of promise was according to his infinite knowledge and sovereign will. God is sovereign in the affairs of mankind and he works in history according to his sovereignty. No person or being is equal to him or able to stop his work in history.

God communicates with man: God spoke to Abraham on several occasions. He wanted Abraham to know how he was going to work in history. He made promises to Abraham. Emphasize that God is not like the trickster false gods. He has self-disclosed information about himself or what he is going to do to people like Abraham. Today, God speaks to us through his Word which we call the Bible. He wants people to know him personally and to believe in him. He will save all who believe in him and forgive them of the guilt and penalty of their sins. God is incredibly good!

Man must have faith in God because he is a sinner and unable to save himself: God has provided a way for people throughout history to come to him. Anyone who desires God's mercy and grace must have faith in God and come to God according to his way.

The principle of substitution shows that God alone provides a proper payment for our sins: God is holy and righteous. He demands death for sin's payment. Only the death and shed blood of the substitute he has chosen is accepted as the payment for sin. God will show mercy and grace to anyone who has faith in him and comes to him in his way.

9. Students Practice Telling the Stories

At the end of this lesson, practice telling the story you have just heard to each other. Everyone needs to practice teaching Bible lessons by telling the stories.

Practice telling the stories of this lesson in pairs. One pair should teach one of the stories in the lesson following this lesson's Table of Contents for divisions in the lessons.

The Table of Contents at the beginning of the lesson lists the stories for each lesson. Some of the stories or sections of a story are short so they should be combined with another section to make the exercise of practicing to teach by using stories a profitable exercise.

When you are teaching a lesson by telling the story, use culturally appropriate questions and illustrations to keep the story interesting and to make the people think about the lesson's meanings. Be prepared to engage the audience with questions which are crafted to bring out how well they understand the meaning of the story.

Use visual aids or objects used in the lesson when you teach a story. Show the pictures at the right time in the story. When illustrations are used, be sure to bring them to a right and logical conclusion. If you do not make the right conclusions through telling the story, people will likely guess what it means and they could easily come to a wrong conclusion.

After you have practiced telling stories to each other, talk about ways to improve your story-telling ability. Be open to critique and be kind to each other as you work together to help each other become master story-tellers. The goal of teaching God's Word via telling Bible stories is not to merely impress your peers; it is the salvation of spiritually lost people.

As you tell the stories ascertain how well you present the stories and the themes. Does your teaching tend to highlight man or does it rightfully focus on God working in history? Do you tell the story so that God is highlighted? Or is man, in a subtle way, the main actor in the story? You need to make sure that the role of God in these stories is the main focus.

10. Teaching Tips for Teachers

Lesson Point #2:

In God's timing, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to Isaac, the son of promise. Now Abraham and Sarah saw God fulfill his promise to them. Though Ishmael was born to Hagar and Abraham, God did not accept him as the son of promise. It is important to emphasize that God always does what he promises. It is useless for people to try to do something to force God to fulfill a promise.

Lesson Point #3:

In some cultures, Ishmael is more important than Isaac. That however, is not what the Bible teaches. Your responsibility is to make sure you teach true biblical history. Teach what God did in history, not what someone says he did in history. Ishmael was not the son of promise. Isaac was. Again, it is fundamentally important to remain faithful to God's account as recorded in the Bible about what happened in history concerning Ishmael and Isaac.

Lesson Point #4:

When teaching this story, pause before telling the ending. Why? To get the people to feel the tension which Abraham experienced in history. God pronounced a death sentence upon Isaac. Abraham believed God's promise to him that all the families of the earth would be blessed because of him, because of his special descendant. If Abraham offered Isaac, how would God fulfill his promise to Abraham? If Abraham refused to obey God's command, he would have shown that he lacked faith in God. Did Abraham lack faith in God or not?

By this point in the teaching, the principle of substitution for the payment for sin should be understood. That is, there should be anticipation that Abraham would proceed to obey God without knowing exactly what God would do next. But they should be expecting one of two things to happen as Abraham took the knife in his hand to strike Isaac. Either God would intervene and provide a substitute to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac OR God would resurrect Isaac because the Deliverer had to come through his lineage according to God's promise.

In this story Abraham is one of the main characters. However, do not just talk about Abraham and the human side of the event. The most important character in this story is God. Focus on what he did in this event in history. Focus on his mercy and grace shown to Isaac. Focus on the fact that the principle of substitution did not originate in Abraham or Isaac or anyone else. It is according to God's eternal plan and knowledge.

Lesson Point #5:

In the story of Abraham offering Isaac, the principle of substitution is demonstrated. When teaching this story, describe what happened in history in practical terms. When God told Abraham to offer up Isaac, he placed a death sentence upon him. Should anyone accuse God of being unfair, remind them that all people are sinners without a way to save themselves.

Isaac, being bound and laying upon the altar, could not free himself. In the same way, people are bound by sin and cannot free themselves from the guilt and penalty of their sins. That is the dilemma of mankind.

God intervened and spared Isaac. What happened to the death sentence he had placed upon Isaac? The death sentence was executed upon the ram, the substitute. It died and its blood was shed in the place of Isaac.

Did the ram deserve to die? The ram had not sinned against God. It was not a sinner like Isaac was. God chose to use the ram as the substitute which died in the place of Isaac. Since the ram was God's choice, then he accepted it as the covering for Isaac's sin. That way, God allowed Isaac to live because of the acceptable substitute.

Did the ram fully pay for Isaac's sin? No, it covered his sin until the true Substitute arrived in history and did his work in history for all mankind. Later, a complete explanation of this Substitute will be given.

At this point it is important that people see themselves as helpless sinners who need God's mercy and grace in order to be saved from the guilt and penalty of their sins.

11. To the Honorable Teacher

If any part of this lesson is misunderstood, go over that part again. Play that part of the lesson again. Summarize that part briefly for the students then play that part a second time. Then ask questions to ascertain whether or not this part of the lesson is now understood correctly.

Be prepared to use proper illustrations to clarify a given lesson point. Sometimes it is helpful to use a picture and talk about what is portrayed in the picture as you teach.

Stress to the students that the important themes of this lesson must be understood before proceeding to the next lesson.

Simple drama can be useful to make a point clearer in the people's minds. Before using drama, be sure that it is culturally appropriate to do so. If people are not accustomed to understanding simple drama, it may be best to not use it.