

ABRAHAM: ONE NOMAD'S AMAZING JOURNEY OF FAITH

When God Says, "Let Go!"

Genesis 22:1–14



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The father, James, sat across the table wearing a tailored grey suit. He glared at his son's American history teacher, Mrs. Moore, and said, "What else can I do? Look, I've created binders for him for each class, and he's still not performing."

Mrs. Moore calmly replied, "Maybe you can let him embrace some of the responsi—"

"I can't lift my shoe off his neck or else he'll fail," James interrupted.

These words from a desperate father, clinging to his hopes and dreams for his son's success, display the verbal symptoms of our disease to possess, to cling, to clutch, and even to control.

While the father's disease to control evidences itself as red ink on a white page, our own tendencies to cling to and control may not show themselves so blatantly. And we may not even be aware of these tendencies. For this reason, God chooses to test us—telling us to let go—just like He did with Abraham.

Genesis 22 contains the account of God calling Abraham to let go of his precious gift—his beloved son, Isaac. Chuck Swindoll says, "Some years after receiving Isaac, as promised by God, the time had come for Abraham's faith to be put to the supreme test." This test would reveal if Abraham cherished God's covenant blessings more than the God of the covenant. Chuck continues:

God is, of course, omniscient. He knows the future as accurately as He knows the past. He doesn't put people to a test to see how well their faith responds under fire; He prepares tests of faith to show us what He has made of us lately. Whether we pass or fail, we learn about ourselves. We learn where we need improvement, or we discover how spiritually mature we have become.¹

From Genesis 22:1–14, we will not only read about God's test to Abraham, but we will gain wisdom for when He tests us. We'll also gain confidence that He can be trusted through the testing.

Quotable

*But it isn't simply
Abraham's story
from ancient days;
it's your and
my story as we
learn the value of
releasing rather
than being caught
in the grip of
the gift.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we near the end of Abraham's life, let's review his record with the *chart*, “A Patriarch in Panorama—The Life of Abraham,” from the first *Searching the Scriptures* study in this series on Abraham. How long did Abraham wait for God's promised son?



Searching the Scriptures Tip

In Chuck Swindoll's book *Searching the Scriptures*, he gives helpful tips for observing what a biblical passage says before interpreting what it means. In Genesis 22, we will use the observation principle of *emphasis*. The author emphasizes what he believes is important. How do we know what is emphasized? Simple: look at the amount of space the writer uses.



Observation: Unswerving Obedience and Unwavering Faith

Begin by reading Genesis 22:1–14 slowly. Before we walk through this passage together, underline in your Bible what initially seems important and note below any questions you may have.



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God's Command—Genesis 22:1–2

Notice how the author provides us God's perspective at the beginning of this story in Genesis 22:1. As you read, remember that you know more than the characters. Why do you think the author chose to portray God's intention?

How does the angel describe Isaac in 22:2? What is the author emphasizing with this description?

Abraham's Response—Genesis 22:3–10

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

Genesis 22:3 serves as a summary of Abraham's response to God's call to let go. But the author then chose to devote six more verses detailing Abraham's next moves along with the conversations between Abraham and his servants and between Abraham and Isaac. What does this dialogue tell us about Abraham's view of God (see especially Genesis 22:5, 8)?



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Isaac 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 his relationship with his father?

Heaven's Provision—Genesis 22:11–14

The biblical authors repeat themselves for emphasis. How many times does the angel call Abraham in 22:11? How many commands does the angel give Abraham in 22:12? Do you see other repeated words or phrases in 22:13–14?

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

Look at what the author tells us at the end of 22:13. Also observe 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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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 notes on this passage at *Lumina*. 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 Moriah? Next, let's locate *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 particular actions with particular people throughout biblical history. We see Abraham's obedience in his response to God's command. What attribute of God does Abraham's dialogue communicate in Genesis 22:5, 8?

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



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Correlation: Let's Compare the Scriptures

Did you know the New Testament references this event? 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.

To help us better understand God's testing, let's use an *NASB concordance* to look up *tested* (Genesis 22:1). You may try searching *test* as well. Peruse the verses and note anything that gives you a clearer picture of how and why God tests His people.

Next, let's look up passages that mention *fear God*. Seeing how biblical authors use the phrase elsewhere in the biblical narrative helps us understand this term in Genesis 22:1–14. *Search* the phrase in the NASB. This online search tool looks for any verse containing both *fear* and *God*, regardless the word order. You may also want to try searching verses that contain both *fear* and *Lord*. As you read through the verses, write down additional insights they provide. (See especially Exodus 18:21; 20:20; Deuteronomy 6:2, 13, 24; Proverbs 1:7; 3:7.)



Application: What Should I Let Go?

At the beginning of Chuck's message, he mentions four main categories where “letting go” is especially difficult. These categories are possessions, occupation, long-awaited desires, and people. Take a moment to think over your own life. As you practice the spiritual discipline of self-reflection, pray that the Holy Spirit



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brings to your mind something or someone you may need to let go. Once you've got something in mind, write down why you're tempted to cling to or control this area of life.

At the end of his sermon, Chuck makes three profound statements:

- 1) "What you cling to is usually what God asks you to release."
- 2) "What you release He often replaces with something or someone far more valuable."
- 3) "When God replaces, He also rewards."

As you meditate on these wonderful principles, what is God calling you to let go? Do you need to apologize to someone for trying to control him or her? Do you cling to your money and refrain from giving for fear that God may not provide? Remember that Abraham took small steps of faith in his obedience to God by getting up early, chopping the wood, and saddling his donkey before journeying to Moriah. Take a moment to write down the steps you need to take toward your Moriah.

As we internalize this biblical account, let's anchor in our hearts the faithfulness and goodness of God who is not only Abraham's provider but also ours. For it is only through this trust in God that we can truly let go and treasure Him above His gifts.



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 and control 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.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 200.



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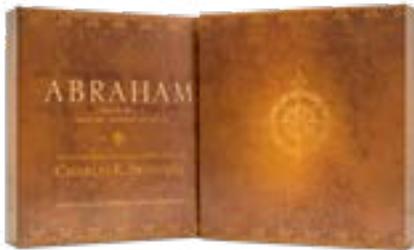
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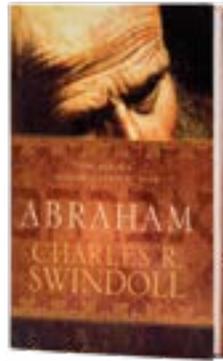
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For the 2017–2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Searching the Scriptures Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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