

True and Better: *Abraham & Isaac*

OakbrookChurch.com Morgan Young 11.24.13

(physical Bible)

This is the:

Largest selling

Longest running

Most read

Most *shoplifted* book in America. <http://tinyurl.com/nlq6mq8>

25 MILLION printed in the US last year.

(as of '11)

There are 471 language translations of the entire Bible.

1,200+ language translations of the New Testament.

1,500 NEW language translations in process.

For people in this room who would say they are followers of Jesus Christ, we would say this is the most important book in the world.

We'd say that this book along with the Holy Spirit is *above all else*, our guiding force in this life.

And it's my hunch, that in this room & in most church gatherings, this is the book that most of us feel most guilty about,
because we feel the most insecure in our understanding of it.

And in this room, even though many of us have been attending church for years, I bet if I we had an open mic and said,
"Who wants to tell us what this book is?"

We'd get a huge variety of answers.

Some would say:

B.I.B.L.E. - Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.

A love letter from God.

It's a collection of stories that help us live our life and help us know God.

It's a book about morality. If we read it and do it we'll live wiser lives.

If you're here and you're not exactly 100% sure about church and God, you may not even know where to start with what to believe about this book.

Maybe you've heard it's the excuse, the rationalization for everything from the Crusades to picketing the funerals of honored servicemen and women.

(SELAH)

This new series, *New and Better*, is designed to help all of us better understand what the Bible is. And how that better understanding can change our lives.

Our desire is that after each week, we better understand the grand story of Jesus and how His story intersects and interacts with each one of our stories.

(SELAH)

Alright to get started better understanding the Bible, let's start in the most obvious place--the thing that we're ALL thinking right now:

Let's look at *my* life ;-)

Roughly the first half of my life, I did not go to church.

I dabbled in God a little. I had my phases where I'd read the Bible.

I even accepted Christ in Chula Vista CA when I was 20. But I didn't do much more than *accept* Jesus as my Savior.

In 1991 I did the smartest thing I've ever done in my life: I married Sandra.

And at her urging we start looking for churches. And I agreed--because she's...hot!

Long story short, we end up here, we both started growing in the mystery of following Jesus and putting him first in our lives.

And so for the last 21 years I've been here, in the only church I've ever regularly attended.

So the first 20-something years of my life are very different, for instance my decisions about

relationships,
priorities,
aspirations,
parties

all were VERY different than today.

So just knowing what little you know of me, we could all agree that if we were telling the story of my life today--we could easily and logically divide into two parts: before Jesus and after Jesus. Yes?

Ok, so again, if we're telling the story of Morgan (and who wouldn't want to?) would we decide to only tell the after Jesus stories?

Would we decide that the events in my life before Jesus, didn't count, or aren't worth telling?

Or would we talk about the period where I played in a band in bars and drank too much?

Would we include that, because that was a picture of trying to be accepted in a way that never brought true peace?

Would we include that, to show how that path didn't work and how I finally found true and better acceptance in the ever-affirming love of Jesus?

Would we leave out the part before Jesus, where my father and I weren't very close?

Or would we include that in the story of Morgan, because after Jesus, I learned and grew in appropriating Jesus as *the* true and better Perfect Father? And how I grew in how to give grace to my earthly father?

Again, knowing what you know about my life, would we sum up my life by saying, "Morgan's life is a bunch of disconnected stories that are separated into two parts, before and after Jesus--and the before part of his life is less important?"

Or would we say,

"The story of Morgan's life is ONE story.

Yes, there's a before Jesus part and an after Jesus part, but they fit together--they're connected. Because we can see where Morgan was, we can better understand the whole picture of his life and can better see how the wrong roads were righted when Jesus came on the scene?

That's what we'd say, right? Yes!

And so here's the Bible...

And far too often we (churches, Christians) say,

"This is a bunch of disconnected stories that are separated into two parts, before and after Jesus--and the before part, the Old Testament, is less important.

But here is the truth:

The Bible is not a series of disconnected stories. It is a *single narrative* (*account*) in which every character points beyond itself to One who is true and better: Jesus. (read aloud)

Adam & Eve is not just about the first man and woman.

There's a true and better 'Adam' who righted the wrong of eating the apple in the Garden of Eden by allowing himself to be captured in the Garden of Gethsemane to be accused, found guilty, and hung on a cross to pay for everyone's sin.

Adam & Eve point to the true and better 'Adam' who made things right, once & for all--Jesus.

The story of Joseph is not just about a brother who was treated horribly and used his eventual power to save his guilty brothers.

It points to the true and better 'Joseph'--Jesus who used His divine power to save us from all the times we've treated Him and others poorly.

The story of Moses is not just the story of a man who stood between God and His people to establish a new covenant.

This story points to a true and better Moses--
Jesus who stands ever-present between us and condemnation.

(SELAH)

So this is what this series is all about Charlie Brown:
helping us understand that the Bible is
one narrative,
one account
The Bible is the story of Jesus.

We're going to understand how what we may have thought were isolated unrelated stories, also point to Jesus.

And today we're going to look at Abraham and Isaac.
This is in Genesis chapter 22:1-19 NLT.

Before we jump into this text we need to know that when Sarah & Abraham gave birth to their only son, Isaac, Abe was 100 and Sarah was 90. So not only is Isaac their *only son*, but he was born to them as a blessing from God in their old age.

Let's read the account:

Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

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

² "Take your son, your only son—yes, 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."

Ok, confession time: For years this has been my least favorite story in the Bible.

When I first heard this story taught, my kids were like 1 & 4...and the idea of God asking me to sacrifice a child...just too much...

And just to be clear: there may not be a bolder, braver, more devout story of faith in God in the whole Bible.

There is a lot Abraham does NOT say in this passage, which most theologians chalk up to the extreme tension and difficulty on Abraham's part, to carry this out.

But we're going to see some things in this story that help us better get our head around this situation. AND we're going to see how this story points to the story of Jesus.

³ The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

What's that last phrase? "WE will come right back."

Abraham believes that even if called to sacrifice his son--as horrible as that act would be--he believes that Isaac will return with him--he believes that God has the ability to bring Isaac back to life.

How do we know? Because about 1,500 years later after the Genesis account, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes a chapter in Hebrews about the greatest FAITH examples of all time, and wrote this:

"Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead."

Hebrew 11:19 NLT

And what else is happening here that points to Jesus? How does this part of the OT connect to the NT?

Isaac is their only son, to be sacrificed, and so Abraham hopes, raised from the dead.

And later, we have Jesus--God's only Son, to be sacrificed, and raised from the dead.

Moving on

⁶ So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders,

How is this imagery familiar to us? Isaac carrying the wood for the burnt offering on his own shoulders?

What part of Jesus' own sacrificial death did He carry on his own shoulders? Cross...

while he himself (Abraham) carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷ Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

Again, this is where putting myself in Abraham's sandals feels like a living nightmare...

Abraham carrying the knife with which he intends to sacrifice his son,

Son asking him this sobering gut-check, tell-me-I'm-dreaming question...

This ridiculously high measure of faith that Abraham had is very much why God chose Abraham to be the father of a great nation and not you or me!

⁸ "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

As we read this next section, notice how there's no dialogue between Abraham and Isaac.

Maybe because the event was too harrowing to document. Maybe because it would be too difficult to read. We don't know.

But here is the event:

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. ¹¹ At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

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

How quickly do you think Abraham stopped & responded?
How angelic must that voice have sounded?
How instantly Abraham's spirit must have froze?

¹² "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."

¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son.

So Abraham took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son.
The ram paid, (atoned) for their sin.

And so likewise Jesus was sacrificed, died on a cross,
to pay (atone) for every sin we have ever done and will ever do.

The ram paid the price so *Isaac* wouldn't have to.
Jesus paid the price so we wouldn't have to.

Jesus paid the price so that any type of living sacrifice would never be needed again.

¹⁴ Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the LORD will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵ Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶ "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 ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

19 Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

Genesis 22:1-19 NLT

So God said to Abraham that he would multiply his descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the shoreline.

And what that means is--because of Abraham's obedience, God used him to establish the Jewish nation of Israel. He established the nation in which Jesus would be born, live, die and rise again.

But Abraham--as amazing as he was-- points to Jesus who is a *true and better* 'Abraham.'

Why is Jesus a true & better Abraham?

Because Abraham established a Jewish nation--which was amazing--he unified the Jewish people as a nation and set the stage through which Jesus came.

But...to be part of that Jewish nation you needed one critical and defining detail:
You had to be a Jew.

So Jesus was a true and better Abraham because when He himself died on the cross, He changed the rules--He made a new covenant.

In short, Jesus opened up the family of God to EVERYONE!

Before it was, "Step 1, be a Jew." So there was division:
Jews and not-a-Jews. But now because of Jesus' sacrifice:

In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises.

Galatians 3:28-29 The Message

So Jesus is a true and better Abraham because now the family of God:
Knows no borders.
Is not limited by nationality, race, ethnicity,
Is a level playing field available to everyone on the planet who has ears to hear!

And too, Jesus is a true and better Isaac, a true and better ram. Why?

Because as the Lamb of God:
He was the once and for all time, sacrifice.

He was the payment for every sin we've done or can conceive.
He was the unleashing of the Holy Spirit made available to all.

(SELAH)

The Bible is not a series of disconnected stories.
It is a *single narrative* in which every character points beyond itself to One who is true and better: Jesus.

And so for you--today--based on the Bible-- this single narrative that is the story of Jesus...based on this true and better Lamb of God who paid your way...who wants to be with you...who wants to lead you...wants to be your Father...

Where are *you* with Jesus?

Is He just a story?

Is he a character that like Abraham, lived a long time ago?

Or for you-- is Jesus the One who willing went to be a sacrifice?

Is Jesus someone who rose from the dead?

Is Jesus someone who is alive now and forever?

Is Jesus the one who is:

your Friend,
your Savior,
your Strength,
your Peace,
your King?

In just the last two weeks I have buried my mother and seen tornados violently ravage parts of our city and miraculously take no lives.

And in both of these events I have thought about Jesus...

Because in both these events, life is in the balance.

I didn't expect my mother to pass in the night and no one expected their home or their car to be ravaged in the blink of an eye.

And I bring these things up because life is fragile and unpredictable.

When it comes to life we always think we have more of it coming.

But that's foolish thinking. Life is a vapor...(James 4:14)

So my question is:

Have you ever personally responded to the death and rising of Jesus?
Have you ever intentionally asked Him to forgive your wrongdoings?
Have you ever asked Him to lead your life? →
Have you ever asked Jesus to adopt you into His family that Abraham started so long ago?

(setup time of response: response slide text below)

If you'd like to be in a relationship with Jesus:

Tell Jesus that you believe He is the sinless Son of God whose death paid for your sin and made a way for you to know God. Thank Him for that.

Ask Him to forgive your sin...

Ask Him to be the leader of your life...

Ask Him to give you a hunger for His Word and for prayer...

Start reading John this week, the 4th book in the New Testament.

If you're in a relationship with Jesus:

Thank Jesus for being the sacrificial Lamb of God, for saving you and forgiving your sin...

Thank Jesus for making a way for you and all people to be part of His family...

Thank Jesus for how lives were spared in our area last Sunday...

Ask Jesus to prompt you to bless specific people this week...

If you're not reading the Bible, start reading Romans this week.

(song: *Jesus Paid it All*)

If you responded to Jesus:

Tell someone!

Get a free Bible behind sound booth.

Start reading John

(prayout)