

connect 360

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Rescue & Redemption

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Rescue and Redemption—Connect 360 Bible Study Guide

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all of the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
- C. After you’ve studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” tab.
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- G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Do you use a Kindle?

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Rescue and Redemption

<i>How to Make the Best Use of This Issue</i>	3
<i>Writers for This Study Guide</i>	7
<i>Introducing Rescue and Redemption</i>	11

DATE OF STUDY

LESSON 1 _____	The Lord Will Provide GENESIS 22:1-19	17
LESSON 2 _____	God Intended It for Good GENESIS 37:14-28; 50:15-21	27
LESSON 3 _____	The Kinsman-Redeemer RUTH 2:1-12, 17-23; 4:1-14	37
LESSON 4 _____	Healing and Judgment 2 KINGS 5	47
LESSON 5 _____	A Strong Shepherd PSALM 23	57
LESSON 6 _____	Rescue in the Day of Trouble PSALM 27	65
LESSON 7 _____	Seek and Find God's Good Plan JEREMIAH 29:1-14	75
LESSON 8 _____	God Rescues a Faithful Follower DANIEL 6	85
LESSON 9 _____	A Picture of God's Redemption HOSEA 1; 3; 14	97
LESSON 10 _____	A Father's Desperate Request for His Son's Rescue MARK 9:14-29	109
LESSON 11 _____	The Necessity of Spiritual Rebirth JOHN 3:1-21	119

LESSON 12 _____	A Miraculous Escape ACTS 12:1–19	129
LESSON 13 _____	An Appeal for Redemption PHILEMON	139
	<i>Our Next New Study</i>	149
	<i>How to Order More Bible Study Materials</i>	151

Introducing

Rescue and Redemption

What images come to mind when you hear the word “rescue”? Do you think of police officers or firefighters acting courageously to save the lives of those in danger? Perhaps you picture EMT’s resuscitating a lifeless body, or park rangers intently looking for lost hikers in a deep forest.

What about the word “redemption”? Do you picture stories of people whose homes and lives have been devastated by disasters, but who have fought valiantly to rebuild and restore their fortunes and their dignity? Perhaps you imagine those who have been wrapped in the clutches of addictions of various kinds and manage to extricate themselves and lead productive lives.

The truth is, we all stand in need of rescue and redemption. In fact, the master narrative of the Bible is one of rescue and redemption as God provides the ultimate remedy for our sinfulness by sending his Son as our Savior. The Bible is also full of examples of God’s rescue and redemption and several of these will be explored in this study.

Consider the story of Abraham and Isaac. God tested Abraham’s faith, and through his obedience, Abraham experienced God in an incredible way. The result of this encounter led to a new name for God: Jehovah Jireh—The Lord Will Provide (Genesis 22:14).

The account of Joseph and his jealous brothers also reveals God’s rescue and redemption. Joseph remained obedient to God through various trials and rose to a high position in the Egyptian government. In a time of famine, he provided rescue for his family. When reunited with his wary brothers,

Joseph explained: “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Gen. 50:20).

Many in our world (and in your community), need rescue and redemption. God is calling you to meet their physical and spiritual needs. How will you respond?

Each summer our Connect 360 Bible Study series focuses on a biblical theme. For a complete list our studies see www.baptistwaypress.org.

Studying These Lessons

The Bible is an amazing book. It is full of stories of God’s activity in history as he provides rescue and redemption for his people, and the overarching theme of the grand narrative of Scripture is one of rescue and redemption. Our God is a purposeful God who takes the initiative to meet the needs of his children, even when they must be disciplined for their disobedience.

One such example occurs in the Book of Jeremiah. Because of their continued disobedience, God’s people are taken into Babylonian exile. As false prophets are seeking to provide the people with false hope, God gives Jeremiah a truthful message. Instead of a brief stay in captivity, Jeremiah reveals the following,

This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:10–13

What a wonderful reminder from the Lord. Even during our difficult days, we can trust our futures to him and know that he listens to our prayers and is concerned for our welfare.

We also see Jesus explaining God’s plan for rescue and redemption to Nicodemus, an influential member of the Jewish ruling body known as the

Sanhedrin. Their conversation, as recorded in John 3, begins with Jesus declaring our need for spiritual rebirth when he says, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3).

The ensuing conversation leads to Jesus declaring the gospel and his role in the gospel story,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

John 3:16–18

Jesus’ words illustrate God’s missionary heart in sending his Son and his desire to save us. Note that our eternal destiny is based on our response to the gospel.

Our Role in the Rescue and Redemption of Others

A few of the stories in this study remind us that we can play a role in the rescue and redemption of others. One such story is found in the Book of Ruth. In this account, we learn of the rescue and redemption provided to Ruth and Naomi by Boaz.

After a series of personal setbacks, including the loss of family members, Ruth and Naomi find themselves barely able to eke out a living. In fact, Ruth gleaned in the fields, gathering grain morsels left behind by the harvesters. At this point in the story we are introduced to a relative named Boaz, who graciously provides for Ruth and Naomi. We also become acquainted with the concept of the “kinsman-redeemer.”

Through some shrewd business dealings, Boaz assumes the kinsman-redeemer role for Ruth. Toward the close of the book we read,

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son.

The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!”

Ruth 4:13–14

In fact, the child born to Boaz and Ruth did become famous. His name was Obed. He became the father of Jesse who became the father of David—all in the genealogy of Jesus!

Another example is found in the Book of Philemon. In this story, Paul serves as an advocate to a runaway slave (Onesimus) who becomes a follower of Christ. Paul writes a heartfelt letter to Philemon (the owner of Onesimus), encouraging him to receive Onesimus back as a brother in Christ, and offers to pay for any loss Philemon has incurred.

You can hear the affection in Paul’s words as he writes,

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

(Philemon 15–16)

Perhaps God is calling you to serve as an advocate for someone who needs rescue and redemption. How will you respond to his call?

RESCUE AND REDEMPTION

Lesson 1	The Lord Will Provide	Genesis 22:1–19
Lesson 2	God Intended It for Good	Genesis 37:14–28; 50:15–21
Lesson 3	The Kinsman-Redeemer	Ruth 2:1–11, 17–23; 4:1–14
Lesson 4	Healing and Judgment	2 Kings 5
Lesson 5	A Strong Shepherd	Psalms 23
Lesson 6	Rescue in the Day of Trouble	Psalms 27
Lesson 7	Seek and Find God’s Good Plan	Jeremiah 29:1–14
Lesson 8	God Rescues a Faithful Follower	Daniel 6
Lesson 9	A Picture of God’s Redemption	Hosea 1; 3; 14

Lesson 10	A Father's Desperate Request for His Son's Rescue	Mark 9:14–29
Lesson 11	The Necessity of Spiritual Rebirth	John 3
Lesson 12	A Miraculous Escape	Acts 12:1–19
Lesson 13	An Appeal for Redemption	Philemon

Additional Resources for Studying Rescue and Redemption¹

Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary—Abridged Edition: New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.

Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman. *Life Application New Testament Commentary*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Vinh Chung. *Where the Wind Leads*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2014.

Bill Hybels. *The Power of a Whisper: Hearing God. Having the Guts to Respond*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010.

Craig S. Keener. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Dale and Sandy Larsen. *Ruth: Rescued by the Redeemer*. Westmont, Illinois: IVP Connect, 2015.

Max Lucado. *It's Not About Me: Rescue From the Life We Thought Would Make Us Happy*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2011.

Notes

1. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.

lesson **1**

The Lord Will Provide

MAIN IDEA

God revealed his rescue and redemption in response to Abraham's demonstration of faith.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

How deep is your trust in God?

STUDY AIM

To deepen my trust in God through faithful actions

QUICK READ

Abraham obeyed, even when God asked him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, and experienced God's rescue and redemption.



Introduction

Years ago, a man was walking through the Nevada desert when he came across an old, abandoned store. Next to the building, he found a hand pump to a well with a note attached to handle, which read:

Had to close the store, but all are welcome to use the well. A vast underground spring supplies this well. However, due to the desert climate, the pump must be primed before use. Under the white rock to the left of the pump is a sealed bottle that contains enough water to prime the pump—but not if you drink any first. Pour about a fourth of the water slowly around top of the hand pump to soak the washers, and then pour the rest directly under the handle and pump quickly. It may take a minute, but keep pumping. This underground spring has never run dry. When you get your fill of water, refill the bottle and place it back under the white rock for the next person.

Desert Pete

P.S. Remember, don't drink first. Trust me and prime the pump. You will have more water than you can hold.

If you had walked across the desert for hours without water and saw this, what would you do?

This story highlights one of the main difficulties with living by faith. Often moving ahead in faith requires that we let go (or even sacrifice) what seems to be a sure thing or something we love. These times reveal where our faith and trust are anchored. A well-known story from the life of Abraham provides insights into how we should deal with these instances. The story of the binding of Isaac, often referred to as the Akedah, gives us an example of a man who acted on his faith and the way God responded to that faithful act.¹

Genesis 22:1–19

1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am,” he replied.

2 Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”

3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled 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. **4** On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. **5** 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.”

6 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, **7** 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?”

8 Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

9 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. **10** Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. **11** But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

12 “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.”

13 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. **14** 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.”

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time **16** and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, **17** I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, **18** and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

The Initial Test (22:1–2)

When Abraham was seventy-five-years-old, God called him to leave his father's territory and journey to a land God would show him (Genesis 12). Abraham responded and traveled to Canaan, where God established a covenant with him and his descendants. God promised to give Abraham's descendants the land of Canaan and make them into a nation which would bless all the nations of the earth. At the time, however, Abraham did not have any children. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, would wait another twenty-five years (when both were well beyond childbearing age) for the birth of their son, Isaac. For Abraham and Sarah, Isaac represented the miraculous power of God, and he was the sole heir through whom the promises of God would be accomplished.

According to Genesis 22:1–2, "Some time later" God told Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son as a burnt offering. There is considerable speculation about the length of time referred to by this phrase, but most scholars concur that Isaac was a teenager at the time. That would mean that there had been many years of apparently peaceful life together as a family. According to Genesis 23, Abraham had developed a significant relationship and reputation with the nearby Hittite population during that time.

Life was good until the day God once again spoke to Abraham and shattered that peace. As with many stories in the Bible, the reader has

information unavailable to the main character(s) in the story. Verse 1 tells us that God's directions to Abraham were a test. Thus, God never intended to allow Abraham to follow through with sacrificing Isaac. However, why would God test Abraham in this way? How far would Abraham have to go to pass the test?

The Faithful Response (22:3–10)

Just as he had previously, Abraham immediately made preparations to obey God's call. He gathered wood for the altar and provisions for the journey. He had conversations with the servants who would accompany him. (The reader is left to wonder what Abraham told Sarah and how she responded.)

Many commentators focus on the immediacy and apparent unquestioning nature of Abraham's response. However, Abraham surely wrestled with questions and wondered if he could do what God was asking. Any parent would, and such thoughts and questions are not a sign of a lack of faith. Faith is not the absence of questions or even doubts. What Abraham teaches us is that faith is acting in obedience, even when we do not have answers to the questions. Indeed, faith can only grow when it is tested and exercised in the absence of certainty. Faith takes those things we believe to be sure and builds a bridge across our uncertainty.

Doubt grows from fear, which is the opposite of faith. Fear paralyzes; faith gives us a way to move forward. Uncertainty and an absence of answers force us to cling to what we do know about the character and promises of God. Abraham demonstrated this in verse 5. He told his servants "We will worship and then we will come back." He had three days of walking to think about what was happening. What did he think would happen when they arrived at the place God would show him? Although he did not have immediate answers to his questions, he chose to trust that God would keep his previous promises.

What must Isaac have been thinking for those three days? As they are walking up the mountain, he verbalized his concern about not having a sacrificial animal. When Abraham replied that God would provide the lamb, the reader gets the first glimpse into what Abraham had been thinking, but

The Akedah in the New Testament

The story of God testing the faith of Father Abraham understandably became an essential part of the oral tradition passed down through the generations. It is referred to twice in the New Testament.

First, in the great list of heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:17–19, the writer cites this event as evidence of Abraham’s faith. The writer states that Abraham believed God could and would raise Isaac from the dead if needed.

Second, when seeking to illustrate his central message that faith without works is dead, James called to mind this event (James 2:21–24). For James, the focus was not on what Abraham may have believed, but on the fact that he acted in faith, and that his action led to righteousness before God.

along with Abraham, the reader must wonder how far this father would have to go before God intervened.

Also, although Abraham’s answer may have been an attempt to avoid an awkward conversation, it does foreshadow what will happen at the top of the mountain. At this point, the writer of the Book of Genesis began to build suspense by slowing the pace of the story. In verse 4, the writer described three days of traveling in a single phrase. Beginning in verse 6, he slowly defined each action. Abraham took the wood and gave it to Isaac. He took the fire and the knife. When they arrived at the place, he built the altar and arranged the wood, bound Isaac, laid him on the altar, reached out his hand, and took the knife. Each action described heightens the tension in the mind of the reader who is still wondering when God will intervene. How far did Abraham have to go to pass this test?

The Supernatural Provision (22:11–19)

At the last possible moment, God called to Abraham and prevented him from killing Isaac. Abraham had passed the test. He had demonstrated the degree

to which he feared God and desired to obey him. The life of his beloved son was less important than his allegiance to God.

One can only imagine the relief that flooded over Abraham as he looked up and saw a ram caught in the bushes nearby. It is not apparent how the animal got there or how long it had been ensnared. However, God provided a lamb, but only after Abraham had fully demonstrated his trust in God.

When God gives us direction, we are often only able to see and receive God's provisions after we have completed all that God asks. This event was so meaningful to Abraham that he renamed the site "The LORD Will Provide." It is possible Abraham left the altar and carved the new name into it so that it served as a memorial to himself and a message to others concerning the lesson he had learned. Descendants passed down the lesson. As verse 14 states, people refer to the significance of this name centuries later. As Abraham and Isaac stood and watched the sacrifice burn on the altar, perhaps God again spoke to Abraham, providing him with further reassurance.

Verses 16–18 record God's reaffirmation of the covenant he made with Abraham years earlier. The son whom Abraham was willing to offer to God was the first of innumerable descendants who would possess the land of promise and be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. As the story ends, there is one easily overlooked, but curious omission. Verse 19 states that Abraham returned to his servants. Where was Isaac? Rabbinic tradition noticed this and developed the thought that Isaac stayed on the mountain, where God taught him as a reward for his willingness to be sacrificed. Although Isaac's continued presence there is unconfirmed, this story illustrates how God acknowledges demonstrations of faith by providing in ways beyond human comprehension.

Implications and Actions

It is easy to trust God when life is going smoothly. However, when life gets difficult, or God calls us to step out of our comfort zones, the level of our trust in God becomes evident. Our instinct is to grab the wheel and try to steer away from any discomfort, or ignore the call of God altogether. However, as

Mt. Moriah

According to the story, God led Abraham and Isaac to Mt. Moriah. Over time, this location has taken on significance for millions of people. Mt. Moriah was later the site of the threshing floor of Orman the Jebusite, which David bought as the location for the temple Solomon built (2 Chronicles 3:1). Today, it is the site of the second most sacred Islamic mosque. According to the Koran, it was this location to which Abraham took Ishmael for sacrifice.

followers of Christ, God has the authority to interrupt our plans. And when he does, the quality of our faith is revealed.

God will never direct you to sacrifice your child on an altar, but he will ask you to place that child in his hands. He may also take or ask you to give up things in which you have always put your trust and sense of security (a job, bank account, relationship, talent, or ability). When he does, he is not punishing you, but inviting you to a deeper level of trust. God is saying, *Give me all you have, and trust that I will provide all you need.*

Questions

1. What in your life would be the most difficult to sacrifice in order to respond in faith to God?

2. How do you determine when a perceived calling is the voice of God?

3. When was the last time you obeyed God by doing something unexpected? What happened?

4. What was the last thing you heard God ask you to do that you have not done yet?

5. When have you experienced God as the Great Provider?

Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–4 are from the New International Version (1984 edition).