

GOD BUILDS A NATION

Bible Verses: Genesis 12–13; 15–17; 21–22; 32–33; 35; Romans 4; Hebrews 11

Important Details: The StoryReader scripts are segments of Scripture taken directly from Zondervan’s *The Story: Teen Edition* (NIV). Each script takes approximately 10 minutes to be read aloud. These segments have been formatted into a *Readers’ Theater*. A Readers’ Theater is an activity in which a few participants are asked to read directly from a script, with the intent of telling a story in a lively manner. Readers are **not expected to memorize or improvise** from the script, but use voice inflection and some gestures appropriate to their characters’ actions and words in order to bring the story to life.

Characters:

- Narrators 1, 2, and 3
- Abraham’s words
- Jacob’s words
- God’s words
- Isaac’s words
- Messengers (2 to 3 readers)

Tweaks to the Text:

Ellipses = words omitted within a sentence for the sake of conciseness. NOTE: No need to slow your reading when you see an ellipsis.

Words in brackets = added words for context

Words in italics = summary sections from Zondervan’s *The Story: Teen Edition* Bible

NARRATOR 1: PART ONE: THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM

The LORD had said to Abram,

GOD: “Go from your country...to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

NARRATOR 1: So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...even though he did not know where he was going. [Then] the LORD said to Abram...

GOD: “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them...So shall your offspring be.”

NARRATOR 2: Abram believed the LORD, and...without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that [his wife’s] womb was also dead....God said to him,

GOD: “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham...I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between

me and you...to be your God and the God of your descendants after you...As for Sarai your wife,... her name will be Sarah...I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations."

NARRATOR 2: Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said. [She] became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

NARRATOR 1: PART TWO: SACRIFICING ISAAC

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him,

GOD: "Abraham! Take...your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

NARRATOR 1: Early the next morning Abraham got up and...set out for the place God had told him about. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham,

ISAAC: "Father? The fire and wood are here...but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

ABRAHAM: "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

NARRATOR 1: When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there...He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar...Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven,

GOD: "Abraham!...Do not lay a hand on the boy...I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

NARRATOR 1: 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.

NARRATOR 3: PART THREE: JACOB AND ESAU

[After Abraham and Sarah died,] Isaac married Rebekah....Twenty years after the wedding...Rebekah gave birth to twins. Esau, the elder...was his dad's favorite. Jacob, the younger...was clearly his mother's favorite. The two boys vied for the inheritance rights, and Jacob proved to be a master manipulator and schemer.

NARRATOR 2: *One day...as Isaac lay in bed, weak and blind, he asked [Esau] for a tasty meal of char-grilled wild meat. After the meal, Isaac would officially pass on his blessing—and God's favor—to Esau. This was to be Esau's long-awaited big day.*

NARRATOR 3: *Rebekah overheard Isaac's plan and came up with a plan of her own. She dressed her favorite son, Jacob, in Esau's clothes...She quickly cooked up some meat and sent Jacob, posing as Esau, into Isaac's bedroom. Isaac, squinting his eyes and touching Jacob, wondered if this was really [Esau]...Jacob lied to his aged dad. Isaac ate. After kissing his son and smelling his scent, Isaac was convinced he was talking to Esau. Then Isaac gave the blessing, also confirming the double share of the material inheritance, to Jacob.*

NARRATOR 2: *Soon after, Esau arrived with his own platter of grilled meat, only to discover that mom and brother had robbed him of his entire future. Angry to the point of fury, he planned to kill Jacob. Rebekah intervened once more and sent Jacob to live with relatives until Esau's anger abated.*

NARRATOR 3: *For twenty years Jacob tended flocks and farmland [and grew his family], and finally he took his large family home to meet Esau once again. But Jacob was careful to approach Esau with respect and humility. The wounds between them were deep and long, and he wasn't sure if Esau was friend or foe.*

NARRATOR 1: Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau...When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said,

MESSENGERS: "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."

NARRATOR 1: Then Jacob prayed,

JACOB: "O God...I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown [me]...Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me."

NARRATOR 3: That night [when] Jacob was left alone...a man wrestled with him till daybreak. [The man knocked] Jacob's hip [out of the socket]. Then the man said [to Jacob], "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

JACOB: "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

GOD [The Man]: "What is your name?"

JACOB: "Jacob."

GOD [The Man]: "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

JACOB: "I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

NARRATOR 1: [Then] Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so...he himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

NARRATOR 3: [After they reconciled,] Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him,

JACOB: "Let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone."

NARRATOR 3: After Jacob returned...God appeared to him again and blessed him. God said to him,

GOD: "A nation and a community of nations will come from you...The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."