



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MARCH 02 2019

no laughing matter

Scripture Story: Genesis 19:1-14.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 14.

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PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Genesis 19 carries in its verses perhaps the strongest cautionary tale in all of Scripture of God’s disgust with open, blatant iniquity.

This biblical episode is not so much about Sodom and Gomorrah, the two famous cities destroyed by God, as it is about a family led by a man named Lot. Lot was Abraham’s nephew, and as such he had in Abraham a solid example of godliness. When Abraham offered him his pick of the promised land to which God had brought them, he chose the lush green plains within sight and earshot of Sodom. It was a fateful decision.

In this decision Lot had laid the groundwork for the destruction of his family. He had unwittingly brought dangerous influences close to his home. Among the serious lessons that cannot be ignored in this story is the importance of staying very far from evil influences lest one become corrupted.

The major lesson of Genesis 19, of course, is God’s judgment against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their immorality was legendary, as evidenced by the homosexuality practiced by the men of the city, all of whom came to Lot’s front door demanding sexual relations with Lot’s angelic guests.

We also see in this story God’s amazing grace, His willingness to save Lot and his family, if they would only obey. God always warns His children before He chastens them. It’s up to us to heed God’s warnings before it is eternally too late.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn that judgment is also a part of God’s love for His creatures. (*Know*)
- Sense the blessing and freedom that comes from true confession and repentance. (*Feel*)
- Have an opportunity to ask God for strength and guidance to live a life of purity and obedience. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Wisdom/Counsel
- Purity
- World issues

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

A man who lived on Long Island was able one day to satisfy a lifelong ambition by purchasing a very fine barometer. When the instrument arrived at his home, he was extremely disappointed to find that the indicating needle appeared to be stuck, pointing to the sector marked “Hurricane.”

After shaking the barometer very vigorously several times, its new owner sat down and wrote a scorching letter to the store from which he had purchased the instrument. The following morning, on the way to his office in New York, he mailed the letter. That evening he returned to Long Island to find not only the barometer missing, but his house also. The barometer's needle had been right—there was a hurricane!

The response from the evil inhabitants of these two cities was similar to the response of the man who thought his barometer was broken. Sometimes truth is unsettling to us, but truth is not changed by our comfort or discomfort.

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Throughout Scripture we see God's warnings sometimes attended to, but more often than not, ignored. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah ignored them at their peril.

One of the truly striking aspects of this story is the response of Lot's sons-in-law when he warned them of the coming destruction. They laughed at their father-in-law. This response says much about the state of Lot's family at the time that the angels showed up. Lot seems to have totally lost control of his family.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Who are some of the minor characters in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? What can we learn from them?
- What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)
- What aspects of the story are new to you?
- Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. How do we sometimes do the same thing? How should God respond to us?
- What lessons can we learn from Lot's family?
- What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (*Draw a rectangle* around them.)
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
- What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (*Circle* them.)

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share in your own words.

The history of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain adds much richness to this narrative.

1. On the south end of the Dead Sea is an area known today as Mount Sodom; it is the area generally thought to be the ancient site of Sodom. What most of us do not know is that Sodom and Gomorrah were not the only cities destroyed that fateful day when fire and brimstone rained down from heaven. So far, archaeologists have uncovered at least five cities that were turned to sulfur ash that day.
2. Some Christians wonder about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other evil cities on the plains of Mamre. God destroyed men, women, and children. Most of us think of children as innocents, not capable of giving consent to sin, but apparently this is not how God sees things.

When Abraham urges God to save the city for the sake of the faithful therein, God lets him know that there were not 10 faithful people living there. What are we to conclude from this? Perhaps the question of children perishing because of the sins of their parents is something we'll have to ask God about when we see Him.

3. Another problematic part of this narrative is Lot's willingness to offer his daughters to the angry mob of men at his door. This depraved mob would have raped the girls and probably killed them. Their sexual depravity led them to reject Lot's offer in favor of the strangers inside.

What are we to conclude about Lot from this offering of his daughters? What kind of father would put his daughters at risk in this way? This moment tells us much about the stress that Lot was under, and the strong influence of the culture in which he lived.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 1, page 333, offers these comments: "His belief in the solemn duty of hospitality, so highly regarded among Eastern nations, explains, though it does not justify, his decision. He who had taken a stranger under his protection and care was bound to defend

him even at the expense of his own life. In some Near Eastern countries the duty of hospitality is still regarded in this light. Only to an Oriental mind, perhaps, would the obligation of a host toward his guests seem to justify, or at least excuse, Lot's conduct on this occasion. The purity of his two daughters in a city like Sodom is evidence of the great care with which Lot had brought them up, and proves that the offer was not lightly made."

4. Ellen White shares the following about the opportunities to know Him given by God to the citizens of Sodom.

"At the time of Lot's removal to Sodom, corruption had not become universal, and God in His mercy permitted rays of light to shine amid the moral darkness. When Abraham rescued the captives from the Elamites, the attention of the people was called to the true faith. Abraham was not a stranger to the people of Sodom, and his worship of the unseen God had been a matter of ridicule among them; but his victory over greatly superior forces, and his magnanimous disposition of the prisoners and spoil, excited wonder and admiration. While his skill and valor were extolled, none could avoid the conviction that a divine power had made him conqueror" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 157).



Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Discussing the Issues

Young people respect when adults are willing to discuss hard questions with them, admitting that they don't know all the answers.

In the teaching of this lesson, encourage students to explore the difficult parts such as: The destruction of all inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's offering of his daughters to an angry mob, the hesitation of Lot's family to leave their home even in the face of impending death, God's attempts to save us even when there seems little chance of our accepting the salvation.

These issues should not be allowed to become the focus of the lesson study, but they should be considered in the discussion. Also, look for opportunities to make comparisons between the behaviors of Sodom's inhabitants and those of people today. For instance, encourage students to compare today's current acceptance of homosexuality with God's view of this sin and its practice in Sodom.

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Most cities have people who practice the sins that doomed Sodom and Gomorrah. While many people simply decry these evils, there are things that Christians can do to help spread a positive God-centered influence.

In closing, take a few minutes to brainstorm a list of possible projects your class can undertake to make your community a better place. Perhaps your class can select an outreach project that focuses on an underserved population such as the elderly, disabled, or young children.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

It was not God's plan to judge Sodom, Gomorrah, and the other cities of the plains of Mamre so severely. The decisions made by these evil peoples sealed their destruction.

This story is included in the biblical narrative as a cautionary tale on the dangers of living near to or associating with those who are doing wrong. However, God is not willing that any of us should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is this love that led God to Lot's door. It's this love that led the angels to practically drag Lot's family from their home kicking and screaming. God refuses to let us go until He has given us every opportunity to be saved.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 14. A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.



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STUDENT LESSON

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flashlight

“The Redeemer of the world declares that there are greater sins than that for which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. Those who hear the gospel invitation calling sinners to repentance, and heed it not, are more guilty before God than were the dwellers in the vale of Siddim. And still greater sin is theirs who profess to know God and to keep His commandments, yet who deny Christ in their character and their daily life” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 165).

keytext

“So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, ‘Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!’ But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.”

(Genesis 19:14, NIV)

what do you think?

If a catastrophe was going to happen in your town, rank the following warnings from which you would want given first priority to which you would want given last priority (1-highest; 5-lowest).

___ I want my mother and father to be warned.

___ I want my friends to be warned.

___ I want my pets to be warned.

___ I want someone to warn me.

___ I want my city to be warned.

did you know?

The names Sodom and Gomorrah were not the original names of the cities God destroyed in Genesis 19. Unfortunately, the real names of Sodom and Gomorrah were not preserved. Sodom was derived from the Hebrew word *S'dom*, which means "burnt." Gomorrah was derived from the Hebrew word *Amorah*, which means "a ruined heap."

These appear to be place names that were assigned after the disaster and were not their original names.

INTO THE STORY

"The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. 'My lords,' he said, 'please turn aside to your servant's house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.'

"No," they answered, 'we will spend the night in the square.'

"But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. They called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'

"Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, 'No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.'

"Get out of our way,' they replied. 'This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge! We'll treat you worse than them.' They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

"But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door. . . .

"The two men said to Lot, 'Do you have anyone else here . . . who belongs to you? Get them out of here, because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.'

"So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, . . . 'Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!' But his sons-in-law thought he was joking."

(Genesis 19:1-14, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)

What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an *arrow* beside them.)

Lot hesitates before obeying the angels' command to leave Sodom. Is this true obedience? Explain.

What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a *rectangle* around them.)

Why do you think it is that Lot's sons-in-law didn't believe him?

If it is never wise to live close to people who are committing sin, what should Lot have done?

punch lines

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it” (**Hebrews 13:2, NIV**).

“The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (**Leviticus 19:34, NIV**).

“How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you” (**Psalms 31:19, NIV**).

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (**Romans 12:2, NIV**).

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God” (**Colossians 3:1, NIV**).

“As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses” (**Joshua 11:15, NIV**).

further insight

“Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 59.

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Sabbath

Read 2 Chronicles 19:10; Ezekiel 3:18; Ezekiel 33:9.

In the *What Do You Think?* section this week you had the difficult task of choosing whom you would warn if a disaster was about to happen and you had to choose the order in which the warnings would be given.

God takes His warnings very seriously, as we'll find out this week.

In each of our scriptural readings for today God gives specific consequences for failing to carry out His warnings. List those consequences below:

Sunday

Read Colossians 3:1.

Read the *Into the Story* passage. Few stories in the Bible are quite as scary as this one. There are several turning points in this Bible episode. List some of them below:

1. Two mysterious strangers show up in town.
2. Lot invites them to stay at his house and insists that they do.
3. _____
4. _____

When the two strangers indicate that God's destruction is soon to fall on Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot senses the urgency of the moment. Does anyone else in his household "get" it? List two possible reasons why Lot's wife, children, and other relatives did not feel this sense of urgency to leave Sodom.

1. _____
2. _____

Are you ready to leave all behind to be saved by God?

Monday

Read Acts 26:25-29.

Read this week's *Key Text* again. This scripture expresses the sad reality of the

people of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time that God destroyed them. How did Lot's sons-in-law respond to his warnings about Sodom's destruction? Which of the following best describes their attitude at the time.

1. "I don't care."
2. "Nothing is going to happen here."
3. "Come back tomorrow."
4. "You sound so funny with all your God talk, Old Man."

In today's reading the apostle Paul would shortly be sentenced to death, but before he was, he preached an awesome sermon. What was King Agrippa's response to Paul's appeals?

How do you respond to God's appeals to you?

Tuesday

Read Romans 12:2.

What were some of the sins committed by the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Several sexual sins come to mind, but they were also guilty of idolatry, witchcraft, and other evil behaviors.

Ellen White notes that there is a sin greater than these. Read the *Flashlight* quote.

Why is this sin considered greater than even those of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Wednesday

Read Matthew 25:40.

One of the few bright spots in the story of Lot, Sodom, and Gomorrah is the theme of hospitality. Do you think Lot knew who his two mysterious guests were when he first invited them to his home? Is it wise today to invite total strangers to your home?

In many cultures, the form of hospitality showed by Lot is expected of all the people. Read the *Punch Lines* for this week and answer the following: How are we supposed to treat strangers we meet? Who might these strangers be?

Can you remember anyone you met or helped who seemed to be an angel sent from God to you? From your reading today, what did Jesus say about helping others?

Thursday

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26, 27.

One of the powerful themes in the story of Sodom is sexual immorality. The men of the city came to Lot's house with evil intentions toward his guests.

Does God love people who commit sexual sins? Read the story found in 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26, 27. God loves sinners, but He cannot accept our sins.

What two things can you do this week to stay sexually pure?

1. _____
2. _____

Friday

Read Romans 12:1, 2.

Is there anything in your life separating you from God? In Lot's family, the sights and sounds of Sodom were too much to give up for God. The angels had to literally drag Lot, his wife, and his daughters from Sodom.

What is preventing you from seeing God?

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 14.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URiHf1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the *Conflict of the Ages* series each year.