

LESSON 9
ABRAHAM BARGAINS WITH GOD
OVER SODOM AND GOMORRAH

GENESIS 18:16-33 ; 19:1-30



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

Contents:

Preparation

Memory verses

Theme

Lesson introduction

Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)

Suggested prayer to close

Attention grabbers

Activities

Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

1. Preparation

- Choose memory verse
- Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. (see point 7)
- Suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children (see point 8)

2. Memory verse options (choose **one** for your class session)

For older children: (choose one which best matches the maturity and language ability of your class)

PROVERBS 11:19 As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.

2 PETER 2:9 “. . . the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment . . . ”

For younger children:

JAMES 5:16 “. . . pray for one another . . . ”

JAMES 5:16c “. . . the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

3. Themes

- God hears us when we pray!
- God delivers the righteous, but will punish the wicked

4. Lesson introduction

Today we are going to read about how Abraham asked God to mercifully save his nephew Lot and his family from the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God answered his prayer for Lot and his daughters, for Lot—even though he had compromised in many ways—was a righteous man. But God judged the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, for no one else there repented of their sin.

5. Verse by Verse Commentary (Key points in bold)

One day the Lord visited Abraham. Although, it seemed an impossible promise since Abraham and Sarah were very old, God promised they would have a son. Then, the Lord shared with Abraham His plans for the wicked city of Sodom. He was about to bring judgment upon them. But there was a problem; Abraham's nephew Lot lived in the city of Sodom. Let's see what happens.

GENESIS 18:16-19

God had great plans for Abraham. He was going to make him the father of a great nation. Jesus, God's own Son, would be a descendant of Abraham. God chose Abraham to be a righteous example to others. Since Abraham was chosen for such great things, God told him of His plans for the city of Sodom, the place where Abraham's nephew Lot lived.

God still speaks to us today, but we do not hear an audible voice as Abraham did. He speaks to His people through His Word, the Bible, and His Holy Spirit convinces us His Word is true. He also pricks our conscience where we need to change. In turn, we speak to God when we pray as we tell Him our needs and praise Him for His goodness. **God hears us when we pray!**

GENESIS 18:20-21

Sodom and Gomorrah had grown very wicked. The people there were sinful and rebellious against God. God could not let them continue in their wicked ways, so He was prepared to judge them. People may think that they can get away with sin forever, but there will come a day of judgment. No one can choose to live a life of sin and not suffer the consequences.

GENESIS 18:22-25

Abraham stood before the Lord and pleaded for any righteous people in the city. Abraham's nephew Lot was in the city and surely Abraham did not want him destroyed with the wicked. Abraham is praying (interceding) for others. This is called intercessory prayer. We, too, can pray for God's protection and blessings on others. **God hears us when we pray!** Notice that Abraham was comfortable going to the Lord to ask Him a question. Do you ever have questions that you would like to ask God? He wants to spend time with us, and to answer our questions through His Word. He has all the answers. Even if we feel something is unfair, like Abraham did, we can go to the Lord and He will help resolve our questions.

GENESIS 18:26-31

Explain to your class that intercession is our way of intruding into a situation, and our first priority in intercession should always be to pray "according to God's will." If we pray according to God's will, He will grant our request. But, how do we know what God's will is? Many times we are not sure, and we must search in His Word to find out what pleases Him and persevere in prayer until God gives us wisdom to know how to apply what He has revealed in the Bible. Abraham also models for us persistence in prayer. He was humble, realizing he was but "dust and ashes;" yet he continually sought the Lord's mercy. Each request Abraham brought, the Lord granted. **God hears us when we pray!** Persistency in prayer is important.

Abraham was called the “friend of God” (James 2:23). What a blessing to have that kind of relationship with the Lord. God wants to have that kind of close relationship with each one of us. We can be God’s friends when we come to Him through Christ.

GENESIS 18:32-33

Lastly, Abraham asked, “Would God save Sodom if ten righteous people remained in the city?” Abraham wanted Lot and his family to be safe from God’s judgment. Surely, Abraham thought, Lot’s family would be the righteous that saved the city. Then, the Lord departed.

We can learn many things from Abraham. God chose him for great blessings; yet, he was humble. Abraham was a man of faith and a man persistent in prayer. He interceded for others. May we follow his example. **God hears us when we pray!** Remember, as Christian, our desire should be to see God’s will done, not our own will. God does not always answer our prayers the way we think He should, but He will always do what is best for us.

As the two angels departed for Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord revealed to Abraham His plans to judge and destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities.

Remember now: Abraham had pleaded, “If there were fifty righteous people in the cities, would God spare the cities?” Abraham had continued to question God about the fate of the city should numbers of righteous people descend. Finally, he had asked if God would spare the city if there were only ten righteous people. God told Abraham that if only ten righteous people could be found in the entire city, He would spare it. God is truly merciful and gracious. He does not desire to judge and punish evil; His desire is that man turn from his evil ways and find His salvation. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.**

As Christians, we need not fear God’s judgment. God sees us as “righteous” because we believe in Him and the work that Jesus did on the cross for our salvation. Though the world today is ripe for God’s judgment, God will deliver us and protect those who have put their trust in Him. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.**

GENESIS 19:1-3

The two angels who had visited with Abraham arrived in Sodom. Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom, which meant that he was a judge or a leader in the city. Judges usually sat by the city gates, the public places (John 29:7, 12-17) where legal and business transactions were finalized. Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7-8), but he made careless decisions. He first pitched his tent close to Sodom; later, he moved into Sodom. Now, we see that he is part of the leadership in the city. It appears that the city ended up controlling his life. We must be careful not to follow what looks good on the outside. Lot knew that what went on in Sodom was wrong. In fact, he made the attempt to bring righteousness into Sodom with him, but he was lacking power.

As Christians, we must realize the danger of becoming too comfortable in this world. We are to be “in” this world, but not “of” it. We are salt and light, but we need to be careful that the things and the ways of this world do not begin to control our lives. Let us go where God calls us; for then, He will go with us. If we exercise our own will above God’s will and travel our own course, God cannot bless our lives.

Lot saw the two angels and he recognized them. He bowed down to them and invited them into his house. The angels refused and said they would stay in the open square. Lot continued to persist strongly, and the angels agreed to come into his house.

GENESIS 19:4-11

Here, we see that the men of the city must have seen the angels. They were so filled with sin that they wanted to come and treat the angels very badly. They were going to hurt the visitors in order to commit their sin and wickedness. These men had allowed sin to so fill them that they would do anything to commit sin. Their intentions toward the angels were an abomination before the Lord. Now, we must realize that God did not destroy Sodom because of any one sin; sin is sin in God's eyes. But, when a culture accepts a sin as normal lifestyle, it indicates that that culture is devoid of morals and unrepentant. Even though Sodom was filled with sin and wickedness, God would have spared them if only a few would have turned to Him. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.**

We must never accept sin. It is so easy to go with the flow and say that things are all right. We must see sin through God's eyes. How do we see sin through God's eyes? We read the Bible. It's like putting on a pair of glasses so you can see clearly. Remember, God wants us to love those who are controlled by sin, but we should never accept any kind of sin as a normal way of life or a right thing to do. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.** Lot went out to try to calm down the people. He even offered his two daughters to them, further indicating how far he had compromised with the world. What a sad place for Lot or anyone to be in! The world has no respect for a compromising Christian. They cried out as if to say, "Who does this guy think he is? He thinks he can judge us." So, they decided to treat him worse than they were going to treat the angels, and they pressed him against the door to the point of almost breaking it down. Then the angels stretched out their hands and blinded the wicked people, confusing their senses so they could not find the door.

What a lesson we can learn about compromising with the world. Let's remember the lesson of Lot and his family and remain committed to be faithful to the Lord no matter what.

GENESIS 19:12-14

Then the angels asked Lot about his relatives. The invitation was to any righteous in Sodom. So Lot went to his sons-in-law and asked them to come, but they thought he was joking. This is another warning to us to not do something God does not call us to do. Lot should not have been in Sodom. He was not changing the city towards righteousness; instead, the city was changing him. His willingness to compromise affected not only the strength of his own relationship with God, but his relative's relationship with God.

If we do what our friends do or accept what they do even if it is against the Word of God, they will not take us seriously when we seek to take a stand for God and righteousness. We must be steadfast—unwilling to accept compromise and sin—while at the same time, loving those who are deceived by sin with the same compassion that Jesus has for those who do not know Him.

GENESIS 19:15-22

Now the angels told Lot that it was time to leave Sodom, but Lot was hesitant to go. The angels grabbed hold of his hands, his wife's hands and the hands of his two daughters and brought them out

of the city. They told them to not look behind them. So, it is with sin in our lives. Sin can exercise powerful control over our lives. We may find ourselves especially struggling with a certain sin. God wants us to surrender completely to Him and lean on His strength to free us from sin. A little compromise with a sin can lead us into a bondage to that sin. We must turn from sin and not look back.

Lot bargained with the angels to go to the small town of Zoar instead of taking on the perils of the mountains. If God were saving him from the judgment of Sodom, would He not save him from any danger in the mountains? God granted Lot's request. Remember that the Bible calls Lot "just" (2 Peter 2:7,8). His deepest desire was right. His problem was his compromise. Such compromise is disastrous in the life of a Christian. When we compromise, we end up causing a great deal of problems in our own lives and in others lives.

GENESIS 19:23-26

Once Lot had gotten into the city, God started His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities. It says He rained fire and brimstone on the cities. God kept His Word, as He always keeps His Word, and everything was destroyed, even what grew on the ground. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.** Many people believe that the "Dead Sea" now covers the remains of the former cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Dead Sea is a lake in Southern Palestine. The Jordan River, and other smaller rivers flow into it, and because it's at the lowest place on earth, no water flows out of it. The water evaporates so quickly that salts and other minerals have become so highly concentrated that nothing can live in it—hence the name, "Dead" Sea. God completely wiped out everything. Lot's wife disobeyed the angels and turned to look back. She still loved Sodom. When she looked back, the Bible tells us she became a pillar of salt. Again, we see the other problem with compromise—it affects the people around us. Perhaps Lot could handle Sodom better than his wife and could leave easier than she could. He may have maintained a relationship with God; however, he suffered tragic consequences as his wife and relatives were unable to escape the influence of the evil culture around them. Sin will affect those we love. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.**

GENESIS 19:27-29

Now we see that Abraham got up early in the morning to see what had become of the cities he had been interceding for. He saw the smoke and desolation, for it was great. As Abraham pleaded for sparing the city, he would have no doubt been thinking of Lot and his family. God did deliver Lot, and though his wife failed to survive, Lot's two daughters accompanied him to safety. God answered Abraham's prayers, for it says, "God remembered Abraham," and He delivered Lot out of the city. God hears our prayers of intercession for our loved ones. The country and the world in which we live is filled with wickedness and sin. Though we must live in this world, we must not compromise. With God's strength, we can be righteous in a wicked world. Let us remember to let God reign supremely over the choices we make: where to go, what to do. In so doing, we will be blessed and protected. Let us not compromise, but stand as a strong witness to those around us who do not know Jesus. And, let us pray without ceasing for loved ones and others who do know Jesus. For we know, **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.**

6. Prayer:

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to intercede in persistent prayer. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

7. Attention Grabbers

Persistent Pillow Perch

What you will need: a small pillow; as many 4.5"x11" pieces of paper and ribbons as the number of children in your class and crayons, pens, pencils, or markers.

Bring a small pillow to class. Show it to the kids and ask them if they think it is too heavy to hold up. Select an eager volunteer to come to the front of the class to demonstrate. Have the volunteer hold his arms straight out in front of his body. Place the pillow gently on his arms. With a stopwatch or the second hand of a watch, time the pillow holder.

While he is holding the pillow, tell the class about persistence in prayer. The dictionary defines perseverance as persisting in what is undertaken, and maintaining a course in spite of difficulty or obstacles, to continue steadfastly. It is not easy to persist in prayer...the TV is on, there are chores to do, we forget. But, the God of all creation is ready to listen when we pray. He will grant the requests that are according to His will. Let the pillow holder hold it up as long as he can. Ask him if it got heavier the longer he held it up. Have him sit down and give someone else a turn. In today's lesson, we are going to learn about persistence in prayer and how God answers our prayers. **God hears us when we pray!**

8. Activities:

Activity option: God Hears

Let the children think of things that are not right in the world; for example, some people need to know Jesus, some people are hungry, some need homes, some need jobs, some people are mean, and some are sick. Ask your students to choose one or two things and commit to intercede for those people or situations. Have them write it on a 4.5" x 11" sheet of paper. Roll these into scrolls and tie them with ribbon. Ask your students to tell you what God does as a result of their prayers.

Activity option: Make Like a Tree and Leave

What you will need: Bring in some tree leaves (or if in a season when leaves are not available cut out leaves from construction paper). Also needed: cardstock paper, crayons or markers, and glue. Before class, cut out two circles (approximately 2" in diameter) from poster board (or sturdy cardboard) for each child in your class. You will also need markers or crayons and masking tape. Fruit preserves, matching fresh fruit, and crackers.

Gather some leaves for each child in your class (can be green leaves or fall leaves. If out of season, cut out leaves from construction paper).

Have each child draw a tree trunk on a sheet of cardstock or white construction paper and have them glue the leaves to the branches of the trees. Explain to your class that in today's lesson, angels will tell Lot to "leave" Sodom. This was probably very hard for him to do as he was leaving two daughters with their husbands in the doomed city. Explain that we should be obedient to God even when it is difficult. **God will deliver the righteous, but will punish the wicked.**

Activity Option: I'm "Outta" Here!

Before class, cut out two circles (approximately 2" in diameter) from poster board (or cardboard) for

each child in your class. You will also need markers or crayons and masking tape. Allow the children to decorate their two chips with anything related to the Bible or Jesus. Next, clear the center of the floor and place two strips of masking tape approximately 3 feet apart. Have 4 or 5 children at a time line up behind one line. They should then lay down one chip and using the other chip they can set it on the edge of the chip on the floor and make it pop up and move forward. Allow the children to race and see who will be the winner. If you have a large class, have the winners of 2 or 3 races race against one another. Explain that Lot should have run away from such a place as Sodom long before he did, but when the angels took him and his family by the hand out of the city, they fled. Just like the chips need “encouragement” to go by applying pressure to them, sometimes the Lord has to apply pressure to our lives to get us to move in the direction He wants us to go. God knows that any sin that has a foothold in our lives will destroy us. We must surrender ourselves completely to God and let Him enable us to walk away from sin. Once free from the grip of sin, we must cherish our freedom and not allow compromise to return us to bondage.

9. Bible text (NIV):

Genesis 18:16-19:30

¹⁶ When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. ¹⁷ Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? ¹⁸ Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ^[a] ¹⁹ For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

²⁰ Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹ that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

²² The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ^[b] ²³ Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare ^[c] the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

²⁶ The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”

²⁷ Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, ²⁸ what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?”

“If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”

²⁹ Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?”

He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”

³⁰ Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?”

He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

³¹ Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?”

He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”

³² Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?”

He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”

³³ When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

¹⁹ 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. ² “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.”

³ 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. ⁴ Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵ 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.”

⁶ Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷ and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. ⁸ 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.”

⁹ “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.

¹⁰ But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹ 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.

¹² The two men said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here—sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, ¹³ 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.”

¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry^[d] 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.

¹⁵ With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.”

¹⁶ When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them. ¹⁷ As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!”

¹⁸ But Lot said to them, “No, my lords,^[e] please! ¹⁹ Your^[f] servant has found favor in your^[g] eyes, and you^[h] have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can’t flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I’ll die. ²⁰ Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it—it is very small, isn’t it? Then my life will be spared.”

²¹ He said to him, “Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of.

²² But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.” (That is why the town was called Zoar.^[i])

²³ By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴ Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens. ²⁵ Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. ²⁶ But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹ So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰ Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave.