

ABRAHAM: ONE NOMAD'S AMAZING JOURNEY OF FAITH

When the Cesspool Overflows

Genesis 19:1–14

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STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In some parts of the world, pollution levels are so high that people get sick simply by breathing the air. Chemical waste fouls the water; contaminants poison the food supply. How can people remain healthy while living in such a toxic environment?

Morally toxic Sodom exposed Lot and his family to pollution of a different kind—pollution of the soul. Depravity hung in the cultural air like a noxious cloud. Cesspools of sin overflowed and exposed Lot and his family to acts of savagery, unrestrained sexual perversions, and appalling forms of abuse. How could anyone remain spiritually healthy living in Sodom's sewer of sin?

Had Joshua lived in Lot's day, he would have warned Lot of the hazards of associating with evil people: "they will be a snare and a trap to you, a whip for your backs and thorny brambles in your eyes" (Joshua 23:13). Likewise, the apostle Paul would have warned: "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Paul would have urged Lot:

Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. Don't participate in the things these people do. (Ephesians 5:6–7)

Tragically, the bad company of the Sodomites *did* corrupt Lot and his family. And the anger of the Lord *did* fall on the people of Sodom and would have consumed Lot as well . . . but for a visit by two angels who came to his rescue.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

To prepare your soul for our visit to Sodom, pause to pray for the Lord to reveal His light in this dark place. Meditate on these verses that focus on God's love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice.

Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens;
your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your justice like the ocean depths. (Psalm 36:5–6)

Quotable

Convictions are deep, strong, firmly rooted inner principles regarding integrity, morality, ethics, and faith. What you know is one thing, but what you do with what you know has to do with convictions.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Let's keep our eyes on our heavenly Father as we step through Sodom's gates. God is the victor in this story, not evil. Read Genesis 19:1–14 and, as you do, look for godly characteristics in the actions of the angels in contrast to the ungodly characteristics exhibited by Lot.

The Angels' Godly Characteristics	Lot's Ungodly Characteristics

Lot's behavior showed signs of contamination: self-interest, betrayal, compromise, and corruption. What could Lot have done to protect himself from the moral pollution of Sodom? What can we do to protect ourselves from moral pollution where we live? Let's look for answers to these questions as we study the story.



Searching the Scriptures Tool

Observation is a critical beginning technique to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Notice features such as contrasts, comparisons, repeated words, cause-and-effect, and emphasized words. Particularly notice imperatives (commands) and verbs (action words), which are like tree limbs. All the ideas in the paragraph, like branches and leaves, connect to these words.



Observation: An Example of Moral Deterioration

The passage reveals Lot's role in the city (Genesis 19:1) and his relationships with three groups—angelic visitors (19:1–3), immoral citizens (19:4–11), and his indifferent family (19:12–14).



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Lot's Role in the Wicked City—Genesis 19:1

Compare Genesis 13:12–13 with Genesis 19:1. A seat at the city gates implied a role of authority for Lot, a position among the governing elders who conducted business and resolved disputes. What progression do you notice from Lot's initial dwelling to his seat at Sodom's city gates? And what does Lot's civic involvement suggest about him?

Abraham and Lot shared much in common as uncle and nephew. Abraham was held in high regard among the Amorites (Genesis 14:13), and Lot was held in high regard among the Sodomites. Both Abraham and Lot were righteous. "Abraham believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous" (15:6). According to Peter, Lot also was "a righteous man" (2 Peter 2:7). However, unlike Abraham, Lot lacked *convictions*. He may have been, as Peter notes, "tormented in his soul by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day" (2:8), but it took a visit by two angels to get him to leave the foul place!

Lot with Angelic Visitors—Genesis 19:1–3

What was the angels' purpose for visiting Sodom (Genesis 18:20–21)?

What do you observe about Lot's initial meeting with the angels (19:1–3)?

The Lord had agreed to spare the city if the angels found ten righteous people (18:32). Lot passed the righteousness test by showing them hospitality. But in doing so, he revealed his hypocritical heart. His hasty ushering the angels out of the city square bore the marks of a cover-up, an attempt to put on cordiality while drawing a curtain on Sodom's horrors.



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Lot among the Immoral Citizens—Genesis 19:4–11

In this section, the author, like a prosecuting attorney, exhibits the *widespread* scale and *extreme* severity of Sodom's sins, removing all doubt that God's judgment is justified. As you read Genesis 19:4–11, list as bullet points the case against Sodom.

The evil of Noah's day had resurfaced in the minds of these depraved men: "everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil" (Genesis 6:5). Noah boarded God's lifeboat when judgment rained; Lot, however, clung to the rails of Sodom's sinking ship. In a pitiful attempt to stay judgment and preserve his livelihood, he pleaded with the vile men: "Please, my brothers . . . don't do such a wicked thing" (19:7). Which of Lot's actions betray his self-seeking motives and lack of convictions (19:6–9)?

Just as Lot could not stop the men lunging like ravenous wolves at their prey, so he could not hold back Sodom's inevitable destruction.

Lot and His Indifferent Family—Genesis 19:12–14

Whom did Lot warn, and what was their response (Genesis 19:12–14)?



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Lot had warned the men at the door, “Don’t do such a wicked thing” (Genesis 19:7); now he warned his would-be sons-in-law, “Quick, get out of the city!” (19:14). How is the response of these two groups to God’s warnings typical in our world of people who are confronted with God’s truth?

Although the citizens of Sodom considered Lot “an outsider” (19:9), he never stood for “outsider” values. Lot was too busy making business deals at the city gate to represent God’s goodness in the city square.



Interpretation: Timeless Principles on Maintaining God’s Convictions

What meaning did the author of Genesis intend to communicate to his readers by recounting this disturbing story? First, write down what this story says about the character of God.

Next, let’s draw some principles from Lot’s behavior. Chuck Swindoll explains the root of Lot’s problems:

Lot became soiled by Sodom’s sin because he lacked convictions. *Convictions are deep, firmly rooted inner principles regarding integrity, morality, ethics, and faith.* A set of convictions helps us recognize good and evil and then prompts us to confront evil and choose good. (emphasis added)¹

What could Lot have done to protect himself and his family? What can we do in our sin-saturated culture? The answer is one word, *convictions*. Imagine: if Lot had *had* convictions, he would have stood up to evil, stood by his family, and stood for God’s values even at the cost of his own business. With this image in mind, formulate your answers to the following questions.



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How will establishing convictions protect you?

How will modeling and affirming convictions in your home protect your family?

How will holding fast to your convictions keep you focused on your values when pressure threatens you to compromise?



Correlation: Comparing Principles

What supportive principles do these verses add?

Proverbs 20:19

2 Corinthians 6:14–18



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Application: The Personal Value of Convictions

How can we maintain our convictions while living in a morally polluted society? The answer: remember what's at stake if we compromise. Chuck Swindoll reflects on how he maintained his convictions by reminding himself what was at stake:

I hadn't been at Camp Courtney for twenty minutes before guys in my barracks began telling me where I could go to shack up at night. Not surprisingly, a majority of the forty-eight Marines in my Quonset hut had contracted a venereal disease. Meanwhile, I had a wife waiting for me at home. While I knew temptation, I knew even more strongly that one day I would have to look her in the eye and either tell her the truth or tell her a pack of lies. And I knew that what I told her would become part of the foundation upon which we would build our marriage, our life together, the home in which we'd rear our children, and ultimately . . . the ministry we would share together.

My convictions became compelling to me personally, which helped me return to her arms with a clear conscience.²

How can Chuck's thought process help you stay true to your convictions?

It's never too late to lay a foundation of love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice on which to build your life. What convictions do you need to establish to keep your conscience clear?

Remember, like Lot, you're not alone. God is with you to strengthen, protect, and even rescue you. Depend on His power when you feel weak, and let His love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice guide your steps.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I pray that You would by Your grace come alongside me and give me angelic strength to stand tall in my world. To stand for right. To stand against wrong. Give me the sensitivity to balance truth with grace and belief with conviction. Keep my eyes on Your character as the light to guide me in love, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 128.
2. Swindoll, *Abraham*, 130.



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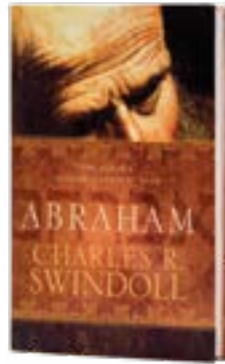
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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