

Lesson 8: Living Righteously in a Wicked World

Purpose: To strengthen our resolve to hold fast to righteous standards during times of increasing wickedness.



My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

If you are interested in downloading the Powerpoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>

Last Week's Lesson Challenge

Research the obligations associated with covenants that you have made in baptism, partaking the sacrament, the priesthood, in temple service and others and consider whether you have lived up to those covenants to the best of your ability. Also, consider how you have been blessed by the Lord as He has fulfilled his part of covenants.

Would anyone share their experiences with understanding the covenants we make and how we live them.

This week's lesson discusses living righteously in a wicked world, but it is actually a discussion of choices. Comparing the choices that Abraham and Lot made, we can determine how to make the best choices in our lives.

Every day you have choices to make. Some of those choices don't have much to do with your eternal salvation ("What color shirt should I wear?"), and some of them have everything to do with it ("Should I break this commandment?"). You may sometimes wonder, "Do my choices really matter?" Or you may even think, "If no one knows what I'm doing, do my decisions really affect anyone?" The answer is yes! Decisions do matter.

<https://www.lds.org/youth/article/why-making-choices-matters?lang=eng>

Genesis 13:1-4

1 And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.

2 And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

The scriptures point out, first, “Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.” Not only did Abram have many cattle – which alone would have been a sign of great wealth--, he also had silver and gold. Abram was a truly wealthy man as the world sees wealth.

Verse 4 tells us that Abram also had great wealth in his devotion to Jehovah. Verse 4 tells us that the first thing Abram does when he arrives back to his home is to call upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis 13:5-12

5 ¶ And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

11 Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

12 Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

Abraham provides an example of one who had great wealth and yet was a man of great faith and righteousness. The incident between him and Lot provides an excellent insight into Abraham's Christlike nature. By all rights Lot should have insisted that Abraham choose first. Lot had been nurtured and protected by Abraham, and Abraham was the patriarch of the clan. Abraham could have taken his rights and given Lot what was left. Instead, his concern was only that "there be no strife" between them, so he gave Lot first choice. Lot seems to have chosen the best land—the well-watered plains of Jordan—and yet there is not a trace of resentment in Abraham. In fact, in the next few chapters is recorded Abraham's intervention to save Lot's life. Here was a man for whom principles came first and material things second. It is not surprising that the Lord should renew the ancient covenant with him and make him father of the faithful.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/genesis-12-17-abraham-father-of-the-faithful?lang=eng>

What are the choices that have been made by Abraham and Lot?

- Abraham placed righteousness over his wealth.
 - With his wealth, he didn't need Jehovah for he and family's living.
 - By choosing Jehovah over his wealth, he illustrated his thankfulness for his blessings.
- Abraham gave Lot, his nephew, the choice of what land to take to settle his family.
 - Abraham, being the patriarch and Lot's protector, should have taken what he wanted and left the remainder to Lot.
 - Showing his devotion to Gospel principles, he gave Lot the first choice.
 - Lot should have thanked Abraham for the honor of first choice, but deferred to Abraham make the first choice.
- Lot chose the fertile plains that surrounded the Jordan River.
 - This land was rich and could easily sustain Lot, his family and his herds.
 - Like other rich lands -- even today --, the land was inhabited by wicked and Sodom and Gomorrah were located in its center.
 - Lot's choice placed he and his family in a wicked area where his faith in Jehovah would be tested.
- Abraham took the hills of Canaan, the desolate desert of today's southern Israel.
 - Modern Hebron is about 19 miles SSW of Jerusalem.

What is the Initial Result of Abraham's Choices?

Genesis 13:14-18

14 ¶ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

Because of the choices Abraham makes, Jehovah fulfills part of the Abrahamic Covenant and gives Abraham and his seed everything that he can see, the Promised Land. Jehovah also tells Abraham that he will make his seed “as the dust of the earth....”

What are the results of Lot's choices?

- The Jordan Plain is home to several kingdoms who have been warring for generations. This includes the area of Mesopotamia where the greater kings reside.
 - Included in these kingdoms are Sodom and Gomorrah.
- A rebellion by some of the lesser, or vassal, kings – including Sodom and Gomorrah --, results in a war called the War of the Nine Kings.
 - The greater kings overcome the lesser kings and force them into tar pits at the south end of the Dead Sea.
 - Many of Sodom and Gomorrah are killed and many are taken captive including Lot.
 - Because Lot lived in Sodom, he was likely part of the army.
 - The greater kings take all of Sodom's possessions including those that belonged to Lot.
- Abraham hears of Lot's capture and calls his allies (confederates) to attack the Mesopotamian kings before they can leave Canaan.
 - Abraham and his army overcome the greater kings near Damascus and take back Lot and all the possessions taken.

Genesis 14:10-16

10 And the vale of Siddim was full of slimepits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain.

11 And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way.

12 And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

13 ¶ And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

14 And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

15 And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

16 And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

Genesis 14: 18-20

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Genesis 14: 17, 21-24

17 ¶ And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

21 And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

22 And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,

23 That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:

24 Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

Abraham meets King Melchizedek, the great High Priest, and blesses Abraham. Abraham pays tithes to Melchizedek.

Shortly after, the King of Sodom approaches Abraham. The King offers to allow Abraham to keep the spoils of battle, but wants the people captured for himself. Abraham wants nothing to do with the wicked King and says

"I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."

He refuses to be associated with the King of Sodom in any manner or form.

From the Joseph Smith Bible Translation of Genesis 14, verses 25 – 40 have been added that provide us with more information about King Melchizedek.

25 And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram.

26 Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire.

27 And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, 28 It being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God;

29 And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name.

30 For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course;

31 To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world.

32 And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven.

33 And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace.

34 And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world;

35 And hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire.

36 And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace.

37 And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God;

38 Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor.

39 Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need.

40 And it came to pass, that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession; according to the covenant which he had made, and according to the blessing wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him.

Genesis 18:23-33 -

23 ¶ And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

30 And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

33 And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

“Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”

In the latter verses of Chapter 18, Abraham “bargains” with Jehovah over the destruction of Sodom. He first asks “Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” He then says if there are 50 righteous in Sodom, will you destroy it? Jehovah says no. He then progresses from 50 to 45 to 40 to 30 to 20 and finally to 10. Jehovah agrees that if there are 10 righteous in Sodom he will not destroy the city. However, Jehovah knows something that Abraham doesn't, there aren't even 10 righteous people in Sodom.

Genesis Chapter 19 is one of the stranger chapters of the Old Testament, and that's saying a lot. It's the final story of Lot and his family and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah have become synonyms for evil in the world. Chapter 19 is an indictment of the evil of these cities and their time.

Part One – Heavenly Messengers and the Men of Sodom – Verses 1 -11

- Lot receives three, not two (according to JST to coincide with the messengers in Chapter 18), “angels” (messengers of Jehovah), into his home after finding walking the streets of Sodom at night.
- Men of Sodom come to Lot’s house and require him to bring out the three men that they might “know” them.
- Lot goes outside and talks to the men of Sodom and asks them “do not so wickedly.”
- Verse 8 says he offers his virgin daughters instead although the JST refutes this with these added verses
11 Wherefore they said unto the man, We will have the men, and thy daughters also; and we will do with them as seemeth us good.
12 Now this was after the wickedness of Sodom.
- Lot pleads with the men of Sodom to go away and leave his house and guests alone and the men become angry and try to force the door.
- The messengers grab Lot and pull him back into the house and shut the door.
- The messengers than “smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so they wearied themselves to find the door.

Part Two – Lot’s Family are Told to Flee Sodom For Is To Be Destroyed - Verses 12 – 22

- Lot is told by the messengers to take his family and flee Sodom for it is to be destroyed.
- Lot talks to his sons-in-law and daughters and they mock him.
- In the morning, the messengers bless Lot, his wife and two daughters and lead them out of the City.
- The messengers tell them:
 - *“Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”* (Verse 17)
- Lot and family escape to Zoar but at some point, Lot’s wife “looked back” and become a pillar of salt.
 - *The account of Lot’s wife being turned into a pillar of salt has puzzled many commentators. Was this event a literal thing, or was it figurative? There are two indications in the scriptures that the phrase “looked back” was an idiomatic way of saying “she turned back” or “returned to Sodom.” When warning the disciples of the destruction which was going to come upon Jerusalem, the Savior warned them to flee without delay, not even going into the house to get their possessions. Jesus said, “And he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:31–32). He then admonished them that he who seeks to save his life will lose it, and he who loses his life will find it. The implication is that Lot’s wife started back to Sodom, perhaps to save some possessions, and was caught in the destruction.*

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/genesis-18-23-abraham-a-model-of-faith-and-righteousness?lang=eng>

Part Three – The Sin of Lot’s Daughters

Lot and his two daughters go to Zoar and live in a cave.

- His daughters conspire to get their father drunk and sleep with him.
 - *31 And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth:*
 - *32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.*
 - *33 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.*
 - *34 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.*
 - *35 And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.*
 - *36 Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.*
 - *37 And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.*
 - *38 And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.*
- The account of the incestuous seduction of Lot by his two daughters is a shocking one but one which, again, illustrates that the Old Testament records the evils of the people as well as their righteousness. There is no way to justify the wickedness of what the two daughters did, although it may be better understood when it is considered that the daughters may have thought that the whole world had been destroyed in the holocaust that befell Sodom and Gomorrah and that Lot was the only source of children left to them. Moses may have included this account in the record because it shows the beginnings of the Moabites and the Ammonites, two peoples that would play an important role in the history of the people of Israel.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/genesis-18-23-abraham-a-model-of-faith-and-righteousness?lang=eng>

Live Intentionally

So how can you make sure you are making good choices? First, consider what you want from your life. Write down some of your goals and how you plan to achieve them. Keep that list where you can see it often. Then when you do have to make a choice, you can think about your list to make sure you don't give up what you want most for something you want now. Setting goals also makes your choices deliberate and intentional instead of being haphazard, random, or based on circumstances.

How does this really work? Let's say one of your goals is to study the scriptures each morning. Every morning you have the choice to get up and read or say your read later and go about your day. Maybe you will read later or maybe you won't. Which do you choose? We all know that reading first thing in the morning is the best choice. Choices like this are before you every day. Keeping your goals in mind will help you make the decisions that will lead you to the things you really want.



This Week's Lesson Challenge

Abraham and Lot showed us two faithful followers of Jehovah making choices. It's not an example of good versus bad choices, but likely the choices we will make as faithful followers of Jesus Christ – the choice between good, better or best choices.

We want to make the best choices. Be aware this week of when you make choices that affect your eternal salvation. They can be as small as studying the scriptures or as big as going to your bishop and finding out what you need to do to again get a temple recommend and start attending the temple.