

ABRAHAM: ONE NOMAD'S AMAZING JOURNEY OF FAITH

Overcoming Depravity's Dangerous Undertow

Genesis 19:30–38



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The deep depravity of our culture constantly threatens to sweep us away into gross indecency and shameless immorality. All around us, lives are being shattered, families ripped apart, and whole communities destroyed.

This powerful current of sin is not a modern phenomenon. The account of Lot's dysfunctional family affair that we'll study in this lesson teaches us that the tragic effects of sin have been with us since the beginning. This embarrassing scene in Genesis 19 reminds us of just how deeply an immoral culture can affect our sense of right and wrong. This story warns us against becoming indifferent and irresponsible in the wicked world we live in, prompting us to remember our weakness and reflect on how we can overcome depravity's dangerous undertow.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

The authors of the Bible spoke plainly about sin because they knew first-hand sin's disastrous effects on families and societies. They warned harshly because they cared deeply for people's souls. Perhaps you have experienced sin's undertow pulling you and your loved ones into dangerous waters. Thankfully, along with warnings, the Bible offers hope—God's rescue. As you begin this study, meditate on God's rescue of those who were drowning in the consequences of their sin—people like Jonah, who praised God who rescued him from the deep:

"I sank beneath the waves,
and the waters closed over me.
Seaweed wrapped itself around my head.
I sank down to the very roots of the mountains.
I was imprisoned in the earth,
whose gates lock shut forever.
But you, O LORD my God,
snatched me from the jaws of death!
As my life was slipping away,
I remembered the LORD." (Jonah 2:5–7)

Quotable

*You can take people
out of Sodom,
but you can't take
Sodom out of
people, especially
those who have
imbibed its lifestyle.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Observation: Lot's Pathetic Family

Now, open your Bible and read Genesis 19:30–38. Lot and his daughters had escaped Sodom's devastation but not the lingering fallout from Sodom's influence.

Why was Lot living in Zoar (Genesis 19:18–21)?

The people of Zoar had just witnessed the terrifying destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. What might they have done to Lot and his daughters to make Lot afraid enough to move to a cave (19:30)? Perhaps the sailors' reaction to Jonah provides a parallel (Jonah 1:7–10).

What prompted Lot's daughters to have incestuous relations with their father (Genesis 19:31–34)?

While in Sodom, Lot offered his daughters to the vile men at the door (19:8). Now, his daughters gave themselves sexually to their drunken father. What values are *missing* in Lot's family system that would permit such sins?



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Look up the word, *pathetic*, in a dictionary, and write down how the first definition of this word is an apt description of Lot and his family.



Correlation: Tracing Family Sin through the Scriptures

Since Adam and Eve's first sin in the garden, sin's malady has plagued families. Adam and Eve's firstborn son murdered his own brother (Genesis 4:8). In Noah's day, the sin of the culture prompted a worldwide flood, and later Noah got so drunk he exposed himself to his sons (6:5–7; 9:20–23). In Isaac's family, his wife Rebekah taught her son, Jacob, to be a deceiver to steal the blessing from Esau (27:1–29). In David's family, his own children committed rape and incest (2 Samuel 13:1–20).

As Chuck Swindoll reminds us, family sin “is not something we cluck our tongues at as we think about someone else; this is your problem and this is mine. We all struggle with the characteristics of depravity.”

Our hearts break for Lot and his shattered family. This wealthy and respected man who once sat at Sodom's gate was living in a cave, driven out of Zoar and destitute. His wife was dead. His daughters were disgraced. What insight can we glean from this tragic account?



Interpretation: Lessons Learned

In the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, *interpretation* is the step of finding the meaning of the text. What lessons did the author intend to pass on to his original audience? Let's examine the meaning of the text through the lenses of four traits.



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The Absence of Divine Perspective

Lot's daughters were concerned about not having an heir—a legitimate problem. But they viewed their problem from a human perspective instead of God's perspective and made a terrible choice. How might they have learned this trait from their father's lack of divine perspective when he chose to live in the Jordan valley (Genesis 13:10–13)?

What *principle* can we learn from Lot's poor example?

A Distortion of Moral Discernment

Lot's daughters distorted God's moral values when they slept with their father. How might their lack of discernment have been passed to them from their father (Genesis 19:8)?

What *principle* can we learn from the daughters' example?



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A Breakdown of Parental Authority

Lot allowed himself to get so drunk that he didn't know what his daughters were doing. What led him to escape his problems through alcohol and abandon his fatherly role?

What *principle* can we learn from Lot's example?

A Buildup of Immoral Insensitivity

How might life in Sodom have contributed to the daughters' actions in the cave? Also, how might Lot's wife's disobedience in looking back at Sodom have impacted her daughters (Genesis 19:26)?

What *principle* can we learn from the influence of Sodom's culture and Lot's wife on the daughters?



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The story's unexpected conclusion drives home the final warning: *sin's consequences impact future generations*. The descendants of the babies born through incest, Moab and Ben-ammi, became the Moabites and Ammonites—Israel's relentless and implacable enemies. Unwittingly, Lot's daughters preserved Sodom's wickedness for generations to come. Chuck Swindoll sums up the hard lessons from Lot's tragic tale:

What happens in the cave near Zoar is simply a rebirth of Sodom. You can take people out of Sodom, but you can't take the Sodom out of people, especially those who have imbibed its lifestyle.



Application: Overcoming Depravity's Dangerous Undertow

Which principle that you listed previously can you apply to your life, and how can you put your application into practice?

Four lifesaving strategies for overcoming depravity's dangerous undertow emerge from this study. Which of these strategies can you begin doing today?

- *Realize no one is immune to the dangers.* Don't say, "This would never happen to me or to one of my children." Knowing your own weaknesses is the first step to guarding against them. "If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience" (1 Corinthians 10:12–13).
- *Stay alert to subtle hints.* Hints of depravity's secret invasion might include toleration of profanity and vulgarity, lowering personal standards, and making light of sacred things. Stand firm in your authority to stop sin's current. "Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness" (Ephesians 5:10–11).
- *Declare and model your standard repeatedly.* Post in your home a list of biblical virtues and standards, and review them often. "Commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands. . . . Repeat them again and again to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:6–7).



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- *Guard against passivity.* Make godliness a big deal! Hold your children accountable to your family's standards. "Be on guard so that you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing" (2 Peter 3:17).

The scorched landscape of the once-lush valley of Sodom was a fitting image of the desolation of Lot, the once-blessed nephew of Abraham. The consequences of moral compromise can be devastating, but, thankfully, God's grace can redeem the most barren soul, as we'll discover when we return to Abraham's storyline in the next study.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the blood of Christ that pays the penalty for all my sin. Thank You for the family of the Son in whom I now live. May I resist the lure of evil and flourish in Your love that is greater than my past and the foundation of hope for my future. Keep my eyes on You and my heart at home. Amen.



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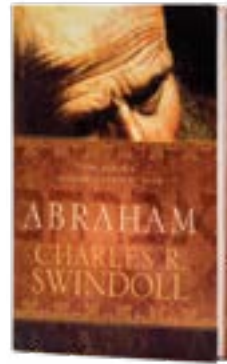
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For the 2017–2018 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Searching the Scriptures Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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