

"In the Beginning, God...."  
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Genesis 18& 19 - Answers

This is such an amazing passage in scripture. First, Abraham meets his God, face-to-face, and then he dares to "bargain" with his God, as he begs for the life of his nephew, Lot. I'm thinking that it would be impossible to get myself past the shock of meeting God Himself - and then somehow wrap my head around the audacity of making a request of God.

But then, I ask myself, isn't that just exactly what I do every day when I approach my God in prayer? I actually meet with Him. And then I ask Him for something. I think I have become calloused to the reality of what is happening when I pray.

Three men approach a tent in the desert. We find out that One of them is actually God Himself - the other two are angels (we'll talk more about that).

They have a message to deliver. Abraham, the "friend of God", is about to meet God Himself, in the flesh....and he can't help wondering....is this really Him? How could this be? And who are these with Him...and why would He be actually sitting down and eating outside my tent? *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."* (Hebrews 13:2)

And then Abraham hears their message and he knows for sure Who he is talking to. He (and Sarah) can hardly believe they are seeing and hearing all this!

Next, One of the three men - the LORD - has a special, private message for Abraham. He tells Abraham what He is about to do to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Abraham learns in the next few hours what it means to make heart-wrenching, intentional, exhausting, humiliating "intercessory prayer" for someone you love, who probably doesn't even deserve what you are doing.

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## **Chapter 18**

1. (:1) Abraham is known as one of the greatest men in the Bible.... What kind of dwelling did he live in?

The answer is simple - Abraham lives in a tent. Now this probably isn't a pup tent, or even a roomy 6-person tent. This is most likely a tent which looks more like a household when you walk into it. But still, it's moveable and temporary.

- Does this teach us that if we want to be great spiritually we should live in a tent?

The answer, of course, is no. My point is: Make sure you don't spiritualize what you read in scripture. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that just because Abraham lived in a tent we should, too.

- What does this teach us?

Just remember - these were real people living real lives. All wandering travelers lived in tents in those days. The literal application of a passage does not mean we have to live as they did then in order to connect with God the way they did.

2. (:2-8) How do we know that one of these three "men" is actually God? We surmise that from the actual Hebrew words used in this passage:

The Hebrew word is:	Its English Equivalent:	How it is written in translations:	It means:
YHWH	Jehovah	LORD	The personal name of God
Adonai	Master	Lord	A description of a type of ruler
Elohim	Supreme God	God	An attribute: supremeness

When the three men first arrived at Abraham's tent, he addresses one of them as "Lord". Does that mean he immediately realized that this was, indeed, the LORD?

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No. In fact, the Hebrew word Abraham uses in verse 3 for "Lord" is "Adonai". That can be a word used for any type of ruler. Abraham saw this man and his companions as having authority, but he still didn't know exactly Who they were.

But further on in the story, verse 13 to be exact, the writer of *Genesis* uses the Hebrew word "YHWY" for the speaker, the actual, personal name of God. So, at this point, the writer lets us know this is the LORD Himself who is talking with Abraham. Does Abraham recognize the LORD? Yes - we'll see, as the chapter goes on, that Abraham is very aware of Who he is talking to.

3. (:9-21) Now we see 2 purposes of God in this visit. What are they?
  1. :9-15 - The LORD is re-affirming His promise that Abraham and Sarah will have a son - in fact, this time He is putting a specific date to it. He says "according to the time of life"...in other words, in about 9 months.
  2. :16-21 - And then the LORD is telling Abraham that He is about to bring down judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah, where Abraham's nephew, Lot, lives.

Abraham is called the "friend of God" in II Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, and James 2:23. What about this passage in *Genesis* would cause you to agree with that?

This passage in *Genesis* is so personal! It shows such an intimate relationship between the LORD and Abraham. The LORD has made a promise that He confirms again He will keep. And the LORD shares with Abraham something that will affect Abraham very much. The LORD decides not to hide these distressing facts from His friend, Abraham.

- Do you consider yourself a "friend of God"?
- What is life like for a "friend of God"?

Abraham's life was not easy. He was greatly blessed of God, but not with ease and lack of troubles.

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4. (:22-33) Why does Abraham work so hard to negotiate the lives of the people of Sodom? What is another term for "negotiating" with God? Hebrews 4:16.

Let's be simple. Abraham was praying. He was talking to the LORD about the situation his nephew, Lot, had gotten himself into. Hebrews 4:16 calls this type of prayer (for someone else's need) "intercessory prayer".

Why is he working so hard? Abraham loves this nephew and feels responsible for him, even though Lot had made his own bad decisions about living in such a colorful but sinful city. Abraham, through no fault of his own, has a heavy burden to carry - his love and care for Lot feels heavy because he can't change Lot, but he still feels responsible for him. So he prays.

5. Why did the whole town of Sodom have to die? Ezekiel 33:11&12 says that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

The LORD doesn't want people to make sinful decisions and to therefore suffer because of the choices they have made. But the LORD cannot have anything to do with sin. He can mercifully wait to deliver judgment for sin. But eventually it must be done. When the LORD died on the cross He was judging sin. He was taking the punishment Himself. The people of Sodom had their chance to look forward to that event happening someday and to trust that He would take care of their sin. But most of them had not done that. Abraham is pleading with the LORD not to destroy those cities if He even could find 10 people who had trusted in the LORD's payment for sin which would come someday. Would the LORD find 10 people?

### **Chapter 19**

6. (:1) Who arrives in Sodom? Who is at the gate?

The two angels (the two men who visited Abraham with the LORD) come now to the city gate. They are on a mission for the LORD. They are going to find out if the sin of Sodom is as bad as they think.

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Not coincidentally Lot is at that gate as they arrive. Lot probably didn't know it, but he had an appointment with the two angels of the LORD that night.

7. (:2&3) Is this Middle-eastern hospitality...or something else?

This definitely is Middle-eastern hospitality...but it also is Lot knowing how his city is going to respond to visitors. He has no doubt seen it before. Visitors arrive in the city, and as the sun sets the men of the city find those visitors, wherever they have lodged, and they demand to see them. They have evil intents.

8. (:4&5) What did the men of Sodom want?

This city is so far gone in sin that the people of Sodom totally expect this sinful, violent thing to happen to any visitor who enters their city. The men of Sodom want to have homosexual relations with the visitors that night.

9. Does it seem odd to you that they would be so open about their desires?  
What does that show us about the condition of that city?

Romans chapter 1 tells us about the downward spiral of sin. (Romans 1:28-31). Each despicable sin leads to an even worse sin, spiraling down to the point that those who take part in each worse sin not only do it, but also cheer on others who do it, too. This city was at the bottom of the spiral. It looks like only Lot and his family are left to say "no" to each worse sin.

10. (:6-8) What in the world is Lot doing when he suggests that his daughters come out and satisfy these men?

This part I don't really understand. Maybe Lot was trying to shame the men of the city. Maybe he knew they would never take him up on his offer because they were all homosexual.

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11. (:9-10) What would have happened if the two men had not intervened?

The men of the city would have broken down the door and killed Lot, as well as everyone else in the house.

12. With things this bad, why do you think Lot still lives in this city?

Why, then, are they still living there? Why are they not so disgusted and so afraid of the sin around them that they flee that place? Unfortunately, the reason is probably because they are also so attracted to the world they live in. There are fine things to enjoy. Fine entertainments. Beautiful clothes. Sumptuous food. They probably think they can just ignore the sin and still enjoy the city.

13. (:11-16) How many righteous did the LORD find in Sodom?

Only 4. Lot, his wife, and Lot's 2 daughters. The two men who were betrothed to marry Lot's daughters practically laughed in Lot's face when he suggested that they flee the city with them.

14. (:17-22) Why does Lot plead to flee to Zoar, not the mountains?

He still doesn't want to leave all the comforts of city living. He is hoping to live in the plains so that he can easily access a nearby city. He is bargaining with God, but not the same way Abraham did. He is asking for his own selfish pleasures. He is addicted to pleasure and can not stand the thought of being totally cut off.

15. (:23-26) What does Lot lose because he had lived so long in the midst of sin?

There is always a price to pay for sin. Yes, Jesus paid the price for sin on the cross - so if we believe in Him the sins we commit cannot send us to Hell. But those sins of ours still leave scars in our lives. Lot was a man of faith (2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:7), but his attraction to sin put him in a precarious position, and he paid a steep price for hanging on to sin so long. He lost his wife, who could not stand to part

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from her things. And later, he was used in a plan of incest by his daughters, who probably knew no better, for they had been raised in a world which worshipped sin.

16. (:27-29) How does the LORD answer Abraham's prayer of Gen. 18:22-31?

Abraham asked for the whole city to be saved. That could not be done. But the LORD does yank Abraham's beloved nephew out of the flames. Lot is saved from the judgment and the death.

17. What does that tell us about prayer...and about the LORD?

The LORD loves us and loves for us to pray - to plead with Him for the lives and souls of those we love. He answers - but not always in the way we pictured it.

18. (:30-38) Did the daughters of Lot do something wrong here?

Oh, sure. This is incest, pure and simple. They were looking out for their own selves, their own future - no matter what. They did not know they could trust the One, True God for their futures - they didn't know they could obey Him and trust Him for the outcome. Or..if they did know that, they decided to do it their own way anyway.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

19. How does God look at homosexuality?

1. Leviticus 18:22, 29
2. Leviticus 20:13
3. Romans 1:26&27
4. I Corinthians 6:9&10
5. I Timothy 1:8-11

So....what if someone says to me: "I'm gay...and you say that the Bible says being gay is sin....how can a loving God deny me the right to a loving relationship with another person? We're not hurting anyone else....I can't help the way I'm made...."

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God says, clearly stated in those verses above, that homosexual acts are sin. They are not good and they are not OK and they are not just a lifestyle choice. They are a choice to rebel against the LORD.

Does everyone who participates in homosexual sin actually realize they are sinning against the LORD? Maybe not right away. But they eventually bear in their bodies, in their spirits, the scars which result from sexual sin. It is inevitable.

Do we love and care for many who are caught in this particular sin? Then find a way to lovingly and honestly address the fact. The results of your bravery to do that are not guaranteed....but if we don't....the results are definitely guaranteed.

20. We've seen it before...what is the result of sin?

Suffering and death.

21. In what ways is our culture just like Sodom and Gomorrah?

In every way. I think we are also at the bottom of the Romans 1 spiral of sin.

22. Should we protect ourselves and our children from our culture? How?

Yes! Any way we can! It takes thought and prayer and in almost every case a willingness to suffer loss. But we can't let them end up like Lot's daughters.

23. Did Lot deserve to be saved from the fire and brimstone?

No.

24. What is that a picture of?

Me. I didn't deserve to be yanked out of the fire, either. The playing field is level. The ones I intercede for in prayer are no different than me. They just haven't found out yet the overcoming joy of knowing Jesus and bowing to His authority.