



LOVING JESUS, LOVING PEOPLE, PLOWING A COUNTER-CULTURE

TEXT: Genesis 19

MAIN IDEA: Spiritual compromise eventually destroys every aspect of our lives.

LEADERS:

- Remember to mark your calendars for our upcoming night of worship on Sunday, November 21, at our Totowa campus. No registration is needed. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Colossians 3:16).
- Discover Emergence is up and running! This is for anyone looking to learn more about our church and to get plugged in. It’s also how to become a member! Classes restart every month and are held at 10:30 in suite 300 in Totowa. Sign up on our digital bulletin.
- If you’ve got a kid in middle or high school, be sure to register them for our upcoming student ministry winter retreat. It’s happening January 14–16 and will be at Camp Orchard Hill in PA. Registration is through the digital bulletin until November 18.

GETTING STARTED:

- Watch this week’s Community Extras Video.
 - **Icebreaker:** What is the most unique part of your personal life story?
 - **Opener:** What did you take away from the sermon this week?
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THE TWO ANGELS CAME TO SODOM

Read: Genesis 19:1–3

Ryan began the message by talking about how Lot, who initially intended to tow the line between benefitting from Sodom’s prosperity while keeping the wicked city at an arm’s length, is now thoroughly entrenched in its life and culture (note he is sitting in the city gate in verse 1).

💡 Can you think of a time when small steps of compromise eventually led you into a place in life that was totally contrary to God’s will?

💡 Ryan also mentioned how pride can lead us to foolishly place ourselves close to objects of temptation. How does this happen?

💡 What does Lot do in these verses that suggests that he is aware that the visitors were in danger by coming into the city?



Read: Genesis 19:4–11

In last week's discussion, we noted that there are several indications that God's primary concern with Sodom and Gomorrah were issues of violence and injustice. First, in Genesis 18:20–21, God says that he has come to judge the cities because "the *outcry* against [them] is great and their sin is very grave." Second, Ezekiel 16:49–50 explicitly tells us this much.

💡 In what ways do our lives reflect the criticism of Ezekiel, that Sodom "and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy"? How can we separate ourselves from that?

💡 As we saw in the Study Guide and the sermon this week, there are two common misuses of this chapter. One is to assert that the only thing we learn from it is that same-sex attraction is wrong; the other is to assert that it has nothing at all to do with same-sex attraction. What are the dangers of each of these extremes, and what is a more accurate way to think about the role that same-sex relations play in the narrative?

LEADERS: We've included some discussion tips at the end of this guide to help you with this challenging topic. Hope this helps.

💡 What are the narrative's (not so subtle) ways of justifying God's judgment against the *entire* city?

💡 Let's not let the desire of the men of Sodom distract us from Lot's heinous suggestion in verses 7 and 8. Reread them, if you have to. Give some examples of how we put our children in harm's way by our moral compromise.

💡 What do you think is signified by the "blindness" inflicted by the angels on the men of Sodom?

BUT HE LINGERED

Read: Genesis 19:12–16

💡 Notice how the angels are unable to illicit any sense of urgency about God's judgment in Lot's family. His sons-in-law won't listen to him because they think he's "jesting" (v. 14). And then, when he is urged to go, he "lingers" and needs to be led by the hand out of the city. Reading this, he seems quite foolish. But how do act in ways that are similar to Lot?

💡 What do these verses teach us about God's heart towards those who are perishing?



THE ESCAPE FROM THE CITY

Read: Genesis 19:17–29

💡 Why do you think Lot is so adamant about continuing to live in the valley, rather than being reunited with Abraham?

💡 🧠 Why is Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt, and in what ways do you struggle that remind you of her?

A DISTURBING END TO A SAD LIFE

Read: Genesis 19:30–38

💡 In the sermon, Ryan noted how Lot, a man who once was so prosperous that he couldn't dwell in the same land as Abraham, has now lost everything because of his compromise with sin. How have you experienced the ravages of sin in your own life? Don't think merely in material terms.

💡 🧠 This is definitely not an account that will make it into children's Sunday school. Why do you think the Bible includes such disturbingly horrific stories?

PRAYER TIME

Pray for the Lord to reveal areas of spiritual compromise in your life.

Pray that God would give you a sense of diligence in reaching out to others and attending to your own spiritual growth.

Pray for those in your life who struggle with issues that you see displayed in the people of Sodom.

FOR LEADERS:

Jude 1:7 seems to confirm that same-sex relations was at least part of the reason why these cities were judged. After commenting on the sin of angels for transgressing God's boundaries and taking wives from "the daughters of men" (Gen 6:1–4), Jude says that the men of Sodom and Gomorrah "likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued 'unnatural desire'" [literally "different flesh," Greek, *sarkos heteras*]. Some commentators stress the link with the "sons of God" passage in Genesis 6 and claim that "different flesh" refers to human-angel relations, rather than same-sex relations. Thus, according to this view, the sin Jude is highlighting in verse 6 and then in verse 7 is basically the same thing—angels having sexual relations with humans and humans attempting to have sexual relations with angels. Though possible, this view is unlikely because (1) the men of



Sodom did not know that Lot's visitors were angels and (2) "flesh" would be a very strange way to refer to angels.

The stronger reason to adopt the traditional view of Genesis 19—that same-sex desire was part of "the sin of Sodom"—is that same-sex relationships were clearly considered sexually immoral for both the ancient Israelite author and the ancient Israelite audience from whom he wrote. We see this clearly in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, both of which target the act itself, not the motivation or manner in which it is done (domination, promiscuity). Both passages call it an "abomination," the same language used in Ezekiel 16:50. This is the unanimous testimony of Scripture.

This may be a difficult discussion for your group. You may have individuals who are same sex attracted themselves, and if not you are likely to have others who have close relationships with those who are, possibly even family members. Whatever the case, we are all called to care for and to earnestly love all people, regardless of background and regardless of sexual orientation. Here are a few suggestions for having this conversation:

- Our first obligation, as Christians, is to God and his Word. We need to be honest with what the Scriptures teach, and to not try to twist them or to get around them in pursuit of some other agenda.
- At the same time, we have latitude for how we present biblical truth. If we truly care about the people whom God calls us to love, we need to exercise wisdom with when and how we say things.
- In all our dealings, we ought to proceed with unambiguous love and humility. This is especially true in engaging questions of sexual ethics because many people will falsely interpret Christian engagement as a form of hate. Through our conduct we should do everything we can to disconfirm this narrative.
- We should lead people to understand that our sexual orientation does not determine who we are and why we matter as human beings. Christ asks all of us to exchange our old selves for a new identity in him. Have you been crucified with Christ? Is it no longer you who live but he who lives in you? The stronger your "yes" is in answering these questions, the more credibility you will have in pointing your same sex attracted friends and family members to Jesus. How can you ask others to sacrifice so much if you have only given little?
- Do everything you can to keep the question of the gospel central. If Jesus was crucified for our sins and was raised by the Father, then everything changes. Nothing about who I am or what I desire can change that. Discipleship is the context in which we work out our faith and progress in our battles with sin. While repentance is required of all who follow him, we also understand that it takes time to see certain sins as wrong, and that experiencing victory can take time. How would your faith look if people had told you, at the outset, that you had to be wholly free of certain sins in order to confess Jesus as your Lord?



- Realize that people who are same sex attracted have built loving relationships with partners and even with children that they might have with their partners. Repentance in such situations is not as easy as simply changing one's mind.
- Do not assume that the spiritual goal for a same sex attracted person is to become heterosexual. While God certainly can change people's desires, there is no guarantee that he always will, or even that he usually does (think of your own sinful desires). There are examples of people for whom God has done this, but there are also many examples of faithful same sex attracted Christians who continue to desire people of the same sex, and who choose to live a life of celibacy.
- We should work to cultivate a credible, vibrant single culture within the church. No one should be made to feel as if their life is incomplete without a romantic relationship. The church needs to avoid idolizing marriage and the family. People should understand that true love and fulfillment comes through Christ, not through the embrace of a spouse.
- We should lift up the voices of gay Christians who embrace God's design for sexuality and are living faithfully for Jesus. This includes writers and speakers such as Christopher Yuan, Jackie Hill Perry, and Greg Coles.