

# Lesson 6A: Living Righteously in a Wicked World

## Reading Preparation:

- Genesis 13-14; 18-19

## Outline:

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## Lesson Notes:

### [1. Introduction](#)

The world in which we live is becoming increasingly wicked. The gap between the values of the world, and the teachings of Jesus Christ, continues to increase with each passing year. The distance between the two points now appears to be more like a wide chasm than a small fracture.

The question which we must face as members of the Church is how do we maintain our association with individuals in the workplace, our neighborhood, and communities whose values are different from ours? How do we hold firm to the values we know to be true, when all around us, we are being challenged for our beliefs? One option may be to move to where there is a greater number of members of the Church. Another is to deliberately isolate ourselves from others in the world. If, however, we are to be a light to the world, we must not extinguish the light we are to hold up. As we seek to be a light to others, another option for us is to seek for common ground with those around us. One way to accomplish this is by highlighting our similarities, rather than focusing on our differences. It is equally important we respect their beliefs, as we ask them to respect ours.

Abram and his family were able to live lives of righteousness in a world surrounded by wickedness. Our focus in this lesson will be regarding what we can learn, and then apply in our lives, from their experiences.

### [2. Returning From Egypt](#)

Abram and his nephew, Lot, under the direction of the Lord (Genesis 12:1), had left Haran. They were led by the Lord to the land of Canaan. Upon their arrival, the Lord told Abram the land upon which he had been led was to be the land of his inheritance (Genesis 12:7). While living in the new land, a famine occurred. It was so pervasive they determined to go to Egypt where there was sufficient food available. After their stay in Egypt, following the famine, they returned to the land of Canaan. It was agreed between Abram and Lot they would each take adjoining parcels of land.

Genesis 13:6-7

**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.**

### [3. Conflict Between Abraham and Lot](#)

Abram determined to resolve the differences between his nephew, Lot, and himself in a fair and equitable manner. He offered a specific option and gave Lot his choice of the two options. It was more important to Abram to maintain a positive relationship with his nephew, than the choice of land upon which he would live.

Why is it important to seek resolutions to issues of conflict?

If we do not seek resolution to conflicts which we have with others, these feelings can act to drive a wedge in our relationship. If they are not addressed, they will adversely affecting our relationship with the individual. Often these

unresolved conflicts can lead to grudges or unaddressed conflicts. In too many cases, the participants no longer recall the original reason for their dispute, but remain unable to admit the part they contributed to the conflict.

The Lord admonished each of us in His Sermon on the Mount, to be peacemakers and to reconcile our differences with others.

Matthew 5:9, 23-24

**9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**

**23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;**

**24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.**

Often each of the offended members feel the other should approach them and apologize for their actions. Each waits for the other to come seeking resolution for their hurt feelings. The Lord provides the following direction regarding the importance of our forgiving others.

Doctrine and Covenants 64:9-10

**9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.**

**10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.**

In the Lord's eyes, the consequences reserved for those who do not forgive and seek reconciliation are greater when we choose not to forgive our neighbor. In truth, don't we all error, and aren't we in need of forgiveness. It is my belief the Lord will forgive us in proportion to the manner in which we forgive others. If we withhold our forgiveness of others, the Lord will withhold His blessings to us. In truth, we pay a high price when we refuse to forgive those who transgress against us.

For your consideration, I share excerpts from Leland E. Anderson, entitled, "Bridging the Ditch:

*It regards two farmers whose lands were in close proximity to each other. The time arrived for a farmer to harvest his crop of peas. It was important that once cut, they be delivered to the factory for processing. The wagon was loaded and the farmer was proceeding when he recalled the closest route to the factory required him to cross a field ditch full of water. He determined that if he gave his small team a rest, they would be able to shoot across the ditch. As the team proceeded, the load proved to be too much and the front wheels of the wagon hit the mud and sank up to the hub!*

*He states, "The only solution was for me to unload all the peas on the ground, pull the empty wagon across, and then proceed to carry the peas and replace them on the wagon...If only another team and wagon would appear on the scene-maybe the two teams could pull me out."*

*As the farmer waited, he saw his neighbor come down the road. His experience with this neighbor is that he did not help anyone. He saw me and noted I was stuck. When I suggested that he help me, he replied. "Well, good luck to you," and away he went down the lane.*

*He states, "Never was I so angry! What I called him cannot be printed-I even spoke in Danish so my team couldn't understand! For a moment I reappraised the law of Moses. I looked up into the sky and said, 'Oh, Father, give me the chance to meet him on the desert some time, choking for a good drink of water. Let me have a barrel of water in my truck so I can pour it out onto the sand and tell him to scratch.'"*

*A few days later, the farmer was again on the same road, but now it was different. It was his neighbor who was stuck in the same ditch with a heavy load of peas on his wagon. As he came closer to his neighbor, a couple of scriptures came to his mind, including "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matthew 5:41), and "Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him" (Matthew 5:25).*

*He acted. "I pulled beside my brother, I stopped and repeated to him his own words: 'So you're stuck, are you, brother?' I hoped he would learn from this new experience the lesson Cain learned in the garden, that there is no such thing as liberty without law."*

*"My neighbor responded that he could not proceed without help. I did not wait longer. I jumped off my wagon, took from it a long chain, and secured it properly onto the end of his wagon tongue. Then the two teams put their shoulders to the wheel and in short order they were all standing on dry ground."*

*The neighbor offered the farmer payment for which he declined.*

*He stated, "We both went on our way rejoicing. I could hardly hold my team-they seemed to want to trot. And I caught myself whistling and singing, 'Come, Come, Ye Saints.'"*

*He continues, "A couple of days later I found a new bridge over the ditch. I smiled as I learned who had obligated all the north field farmers with this needed contribution.*

*"Two weeks later, while cutting more hay one day, I noticed a man coming through my field. It was my neighbor. 'Let your team have a break, while we settle the problems of the world,' he said. So we visited for a few minutes. Then, as he started to leave, he looked squarely at me and, in halting phrases, apologized for leaving me in the ditch.*

*"I have often wondered which one of us was the un-neighborly one. When had I ever volunteered to him any kindness? The injured one may well be the one who seeks confrontation and better understanding. We both learned a valuable lesson that day." (Leland E. Anderson. "Bridging the Ditch," in *Sunshine for the Latter-day Saint Soul: 101 Stories to Brighten Your Day and Gladden Your Life*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998, [Third Printing, 1998], 23-25).*

I don't believe there would have been such a favorable outcome, had the farmer treated his neighbor as his neighbor had treated him.

Genesis 13:8-9

**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.**

It is apparent there is a difference between the two choices of land. What is the difference in the two choices?

Genesis 13:10

**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.**

The difference in the two choices was one had an abundance of water and land was beautiful to look upon. Lot did not defer to his uncle, who has been like a father to him, and encourage Abram to take the better land. Instead, he chose it for himself. By his choice, we also learn about Lot's character.

Abram does not dispute, but defers to Lot's choice of land, and he takes the other land. He accepts his nephew's choice without ranker or questioning.

#### **4. Which Direction Does Your Tent Face?**

In this instance, near by the land Lot had chosen, is was located the established city of Sodom. The city of Sodom was noted for its "wickedness and [its occupants as being] sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Genesis 13:13). Once, however, Lot established himself and his family in the land, he chose to "pitch his tent toward Sodom" (Genesis 13:12).

What is the spiritual equivalent of pitching our tents toward Sodom?

We assume we can associate with evil things instead of shunning them, or we may even allow ourselves to commit small sins without thinking they can lead to bigger ones.

It is not unusual those who lose their way, often begin by neglecting first to say their personal prayers. Next, their attendance at church is less frequent. They then begin to question the doctrine of the church, concluding the commandments are "too strict." Next comes the breaking of previously honored commandments. Frequently these include the law of chastity and the word of wisdom.

When we choose to direct our vision "toward" [in the direction of; so as to face, facing], we are expressing our longing, or desire, for what we view. If we do not turn away, or advert our attention, it is likely, we will follow the desire of our longing and move toward the direction of our vision. It is not surprising to learn, shortly after, "Lot, Abram's brother's son,...[now] dwelt in Sodom..." (Genesis 14:12).

The decision of Lot and his family to relocate to the city of Sodom, will have a profound effect upon his family in the future.

We often think we can live with wickedness, but not be affected by it. Many have learned from sad experience that this is a most difficult challenge. Often, instead of influencing others for good, they find themselves being negatively influenced by those with whom they chose to associate.

It is important which direction we chose to pitch our tents. In ancient America, the people of King Benjamin were instructed to gather at the temple in order to hear the final words of their king. They made the decision to pitch their tents facing a specific direction.

B/M, Mosiah 2:6

**6 And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, ...**

Does it really matter which way our “tent” [homes, eyes] face?

It does. If we choose to associate with evil, we will be adversely affected by it. We must seek at all times to avoid even the appearance of evil.

How can we point our homes more toward the temple instead of worldly places?

As we seek for that which uplifts and surround ourselves with the pure and the spiritual, we will be strengthened in our ability to avoid sin and evil. One day, we may even cringe at the sight of evil. No longer will wickedness be enticing to us.

## 5. Abraham Rescues Lot and Meets With Melchizedek

Mark E. Peterson states,

*“While Lot was living in Sodom, and before its destruction, that city was attacked and its inhabitants were taken away as prisoners. In this battle Lot and his family were seized and carried away with other prisoners.” (Abraham: Friend of God. Salt Lake: Deseret Book Co., 1979, 91.)*

Genesis 14:8, 11-12

**8 And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim;  
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.**

Abram, upon learning of Lot’s capture, immediately takes action to rescue him and his family.

Genesis 14:14, 16

**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.  
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.**

At this time, Melchizedek, the King of Salem, came to greet Abram and to honor his success in retrieving the residents.

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 [Abram] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all.**

Abram pays a tithing on his wealth to Melchizedek. We learn more about Melchizedek from the Prophet Alma, as recorded in the Book of Mormon.

B/M, Alma 13:14-15, 17-19

**14 Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.  
15 And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.  
17 Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and**

abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

18 But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.

19 Now, there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater; therefore, of him they have more particularly made mention.

We will later learn that Melchizedek was so righteous that, like Enoch, he and his city will be translated. Later, as Alma stated, the higher priesthood authority will be called after the name of Melchizedek.

The King of Sodom come to Abram and offers him a reward for his efforts.

Genesis 14:21-23

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:

Why did Abram refuse to accept even a thread as a reward from the king of Sodom?

He did not want to receive anything from an unrighteous king.

What might be considered a “thread” of immorality in today’s world? What might be a “thread” of dishonesty?

Anytime we compromise our standards, we have accepted a thread of wickedness into our lives. We cannot be partially clean in our associations with those of the opposite sex; or partially honest in our dealings with others. We must never compromise our standards of morality or our conduct with others. To do so, is to take one step down a very slippery path that will leave us with regret and unhappiness. If we find ourselves in these circumstances, it is important we immediately take the steps of repentance, including confession. Like Abram, we must remain fully and completely pure and clean in all our actions, public and private.

## 6. Sodom and Gomorrah is Destroyed

Abram, now, called, Abraham having demonstrated his determination to serve the Lord, is visited by three servants sent by the Lord. They will inform Abraham and his elderly wife, Sarah, that they are going to have a son. They also inform him that due to the wickedness of the cities, Sodom and Gomorrah are going to be destroyed. Abraham’s concern must have been great as he knew that his nephew, Lot, and his family lived in Sodom.

The Lord, in response to Abraham’s desire of the servants, sends two angels to warn Lot of the pending destruction.

Genesis 19:12-14

12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:

13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

After the failure of Lot’s son’s in law to heed his warning of the cities destruction, he returned to his home. One can only imagine the grief Lot and his wife felt as he knew the fate that awaited those who remained, including his own family members.

Genesis 19:15-17



15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city.

17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

Note the two angels gave Lot and his family strict commands. They were to “look not behind thee;...[and] escape to the mountain.” (Genesis 19:17).

Genesis 19:24-25

24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed by the Lord. They are remembered throughout history as cities that were destroyed in response to their wickedness.

## [7. Lot's Wife](#)

Genesis 19:26

26 But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Often when we reference the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, we also speak of Lot's wife.

She could have survived the destruction of her home, if, and that is an important if, she had not chosen to look back. She had heard the instructions of the angels not to look back. Was her disobedience to the angel's directive, figurative or actual? We may also ask, Why did she?

The Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

*“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; emphasis added). He then admonished them that he who seeks to save his life will lose it, and he who loses his life will find it.*

*“...Bruce R. McConkie paraphrased those verses in these words. ‘Look not back to Sodom and the wealth and luxury you are leaving. Stay not in the burning house, in the hope of salvaging your treasures, let the flame destroy you; but flee, flee to the mountains. ‘Seek temporal things and lose eternal life; sacrifice the things of this life, and gain eternal life.’ (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, 645)].*

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

*“In the Doctrine and Covenants is a scripture that uses the same terminology as Genesis 19:26. After warning the Saints to flee spiritual Babylon, which is wickedness, the Lord says, ‘He that goeth, let him not look back lest sudden destruction shall come upon him.’ (D&C 133:15; emphasis added). Again, the implication is that of a return to wickedness.” (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 76-77).*

The predominate opinion is Lot's wife, didn't just “look back,” she went back. In the process of returning, she was killed along with the other inhabitants of the city.

Why did she go back? She was with her husband and other family members. They were going away from promised destruction. She may have returned because she could not bear leaving those family members who had chosen to remain behind. I also believe, however, she went back because she lacked the commitment and testimony to go forward in faith and trust in the Lord. In this regard, her decision is a warning to each of us not to neglect our testimony, believing we will be able to weather the storm on borrowed light. When the going gets tough, we will all need to be firm in the faith. We each need to go forward with complete obedience to the commandments of the Lord. In that sense, we would do well never to forget Lot's wife.

## 8. Conclusions

As we conclude these chapters from Genesis, we have been taught important truths that can bless our lives today. These include: (1) Avoiding conflict and seeking reconciliation with others; (2) Remembering the direction we face does matter and it is determined by our daily thoughts, choices, and actions; (3) It is important to stand up for what is right and rescue those who make foolish decisions; (4) We must always remember who we serve and be diligent in our giving of tithes and offerings; (5) The wicked will be destroyed in the Lord's due time. Wickedness never will bring happiness; and (6) It is important to gain our own testimony and to be obedient so we can be a light to others.

Why was Lot and his family spared the destruction of Sodom?

Genesis 19:29

**29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.**

In conclusion, we must not underestimate the influence our lives can have upon others. The light of the gospel we emulate by the righteous choices we make daily, can serve to also bless those around us. We never know how another may be positively affected by our simple obedience to what we know is right.

Spencer W. Kimball states,

*“Many voices of seducing spirits advocate carnal pleasures and unrestrained physical satisfactions. Our world is now much the same as it was in the days of the Nephite prophet who said:...if it were not for the prayers of the righteous....ye would even now be visited with utter destruction...” (B/M, Alma 10:22). Of course, there are many many upright and faithful who live all the commandments and whose lives and prayers keep the world from destruction.” (“Voices of the Past, of the Present, of the Future,” in Ensign, June, 1971, 16).*

Let us be a light to others as we choose to do the right, and we will affect the lives of others for good.