

## Families Nearer Heaven Lot's Family—Making Wise Decisions

**Intro:** In this series we have seen that the families of the Bible faced many of the challenges that we face. At times their example inspires us to rise to new levels of faith; at other times their failures serve as sober warnings to take a second look at what we're doing. Perhaps we could all learn at the expense of a Bible character who learned at a terrible price the high cost of making decisions by listening to the wrong voices and making decisions by the wrong set of values.

Let's turn to Genesis and consider the story of Lot's family and importance of making wise decisions.

### Lot's decision

It all began in the mountainous regions of central Palestine. Lot's uncle Abraham had acquired great wealth and Lot as his nephew was able to enjoy his bounty, so much so, that grazing land in the area was not sufficient for the livestock of both, and consequently, conflict broke out between the respective herdsmen of Abram and Lot. Abram in his magnanimous spirit offered Lot his choice of all the land before them.

*And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan; and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord. (Genesis 13:10-13)*

What did Lot see when he “*lifted up his eyes*”? He saw a land that was perfectly suited for raising “kids”; but not for raising children.

Economically it looked like a no-brainer. Lot had herds and flocks; they needed lots of grass and water. The Jordan Valley had lots of grass and water. This was an ideal choice!

Yet Moses in recounting the story says that there is something else that Lot needed to factor in. Sodom was a city of notorious immorality, a city the name of which continues to describe immoral homosexual acts and which would ultimately bring destruction upon itself.

The full impact of Lot's decision was not immediately felt; for initially he had chosen to move his tents only “*as far as Sodom*”. But as the story progresses we see that Lot eventually decided to take up residence in the city rather than live in tents outside.

Genesis 14 records how Lot and his family were caught up in the political tensions and wars involving the kingdoms of the region. He and his family were captured by an alliance of kings that had invaded the cities of the plain. And we are told:

*Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. And they also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom. (Genesis 14:11-12)*

Lot apparently allowed himself and his family to be subjected to the worldly messages of Sodom and Gomorrah. If that town could have talked it would have said something like this:

Why do you nomads live out there under the constant threat of attack? There is security here.

Why must you live only on goat's milk and bread when fresh farm vegetables are available in our markets? There is luxury here.

You are constantly moving; but the people here have nice mud brick homes. There is permanence here.

Security, luxury, and permanence are all things that suggested a greater quality of life for Lot and his family.

But, how would a godly man and his family be able to live in such a wicked environment? Clearly, they had not capitulated to evil. In fact, in spite of the benefits of city living, Lot was acutely aware of the evil of this city and it was a source of vexation to him.

Peter reveals the impact that the wicked people of Sodom were having on Lot.

*and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds), (2 Peter 2:7-8)*

Clearly Lot had not approved of the wicked deeds of this city; yet somehow in spite of his differing viewpoint, he had apparently decided to stay; and somehow he even managed to take a prominent place in the city.

The next thing we read about Lot is that he is sitting in the gate of the city of Sodom.

*Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. (Gen. 19:1)*

Lot is fully aware of the violent tendencies of his fellow-citizens. He warns the angels not to sleep in the square; but they have come with a warning of their own. God's wrath is about to be unleashed upon these wicked people, and if he and his family do not leave they will be caught up in their destruction.

Whatever credit Lot might have been given for maintaining some measure of righteousness in Sodom, he and his family would not come out totally unscathed.

When the angels urged his family to avoid the impending destruction, they did not respect him and would not take him seriously.

*And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will*

*destroy the city.” But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting. (Genesis 19:14)*

Even Lot was having trouble turning loose of the grip of this city. *And when morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.” But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city. (Genesis 19:15-16)*

Lot himself could not even fully accept the salvation that the angels had offered, negotiating with them to let him flee to another small city nearby rather than flee to the mountains as instructed.

Of course the destruction came as God had decreed. But apparently Lot’s wife’s attachment to the city was too great to resist the order of God not to look back.

*Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt. (Genesis 19:24-26)*

Jesus would later remind his fellow-Jews in his prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem not to look back with longing to their city and perish. Instead he urged them, “Remember Lot’s wife” (Lk. 17:32). Apparently Lot had not realized the impact that his decision was having on his family! And his sorrows would not end with this episode. Later his daughters, their ethical values skewed by the wickedness of Sodom, would make him drunk and commit incest with him, conceiving Moab and Ammon from whom would come people who ironically would be a thorn in the side to the descendants of His uncle Abraham, the very one who had so many years before treated him so graciously. One wonders, did they remember when the men of Sodom came to Lot’s door to solicit relations with the messengers that their own father had offered them instead?

Surely, Lot’s family teaches us the importance of making wise decisions.

What do we need to remember in view of Lot’s mistakes?

### **Principles for making wise decisions**

Look critically at the choices you make for your family.

William Blake once wrote the following verse about our eyes that drives the point home:

This life's dim windows of the soul

**Distort** the heavens from pole to pole

And lead you to believe a lie

When you see with, not through, the eye.

Sometimes the quick and easy decision is not the best decision. Make sure that you make important decisions with deliberation and prayer.

Take into account the spiritual impact of your choices and not merely the physical.

A lot of decisions look good from an earthly viewpoint that may not look so good when the spiritual is taken into account.

Always ask, "What are the spiritual liabilities of this decision?"

Seek the advice of other wise family leaders.

It is easy to be caught up in the emotional attraction of what we want.

It is wise at times to ask for the thinking of someone who can advise us objectively about our decisions.

Beware of the tendency to rationalization and self-deception.

Sometimes we can, in making bad choices, justify our decision by spiritual rationalizations.

Lot might have argued, "But look at the influence I'm having. I'll change these people. Living in Sodom gives me more time to think about God."

Instead we need to keep a sensitive conscience after making the choice. Sometimes how we feel inside tells us that we have made a mistake.

Regularly monitor your spiritual growth and that of your family.

Sometimes a decision may not have immediate impact; but we may begin to see periodic indications that our choices have not been good ones.

If you feel that the spiritual life of you and your family is suffering by a decision, don't be so proud that you cannot reverse course.

**Conclusion: In my experience I have seen people make these kinds of choices again and again. Somehow we convince ourselves that we will be able to compensate for what we know is not best for us spiritually. And sadly most people will not realize their mistake until it is too late.**

**How much better it is to reflect soberly on Lot and learn from his mistakes. No decision, no matter how much income, prestige, or luxury, or security is worth it, if it causes us to lose touch with God and precious time with our children! Be wise! Be spiritual! Make your family decisions with God's will always in view.**