

Friendship Booklets:

Announcements:

Acknowledgement and Prayer for the Offering ... transition into praying for us

### Series Setup/Goal ...

Today we are going to look at the second message in a three part series called “Trusting in God during Uncertain Times.” I want to invite you as we get started to open your Bibles to the **12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Genesis** – you may have your Bible in book form or you may have it in Phone form but I want to encourage you to engage God’s Word with us.

If you are interested in taking notes, we’ve provided a place to do that in your bulletin and you may also open up our Live Event in the YouVersion App (details and a QR code is in your bulletin, as well). **Last week**, we looked at the powerful story of Hannah and the birth of her son Samuel. She was a woman who was loved by her husband, provoked by another woman and shamefully unable to have children. With her future filled with uncertainty, she called out on God and he answered her prayer. She then trusted God with her son and physically gave him back to the Lord and he was raised in the Temple as a prophet of God.

The story has a happy ending and we can miss the pitfalls and heartaches in the journey if we aren’t careful. So let’s get real for a minute ... when you think about what feels uncertain in your life, what comes to mind? What puts your feet on shaky or unsettled ground?

Last week, I asked a question in the Live Event we are doing through YouVersion “What was your greatest disappointment in life so far?” The responses were genuine and deep.

- > every Christmas of my life
- > rejection after rejection from teaching job interviews
- > shutting people out when going thru tough times, leaving me feeling friendless
- > my divorce, my marriage, the loss of my wife to cancer
- > my marriage that has hit every trial mentioned in traditional vows

**I LOVE hearing from you thru these LiveEvents in YouVersion.**

So the big question we have to face is this ... how do we, as people, find an **anchor**, or find **deeper meaning** in those moments when life is so unsure? How do we **ground** ourselves into something that is **certain**? How do we deal with and **navigate** through our disappointments, hurts, let downs, tragedies, and storms of life?

Many of us don’t ... we just deal with each moment as they come. We close our eyes and hope that it will all make sense somehow on its own. It never does.

Others are finding hope being anchored in something that doesn’t change over time, that’s found in placing our “trust” in the only rock, the only true foundation in life. The Lord.

This morning, we are going to look at the story of **Lot**. His life was filled with uncertainty and disappointment at a young age when his father died. His father, Haran, was the youngest brother of Abram (who later would be called Abraham). We have no Biblical evidence how old Haran was when he died nor how old Lot was when he began to travel with Abram but we can assume it's closely related to the fact that Abram was the eldest Uncle and the only Uncle who needed the help since he had no children of his own.

**Genesis 12** we see the Lord call out to Abram to leave his current land go to a place I will show you. In a great act of faith and obedience he does and in the midst of this, we see that his Nephew Lot joined Abram's traveling side show. *To keep things moving along, I need to skip the parts of this story* but as they begin traveling, they eventually end up in Egypt for a time and then, Abram and Lot settle in the lush land between Bethel and Ai.

Here is where things get interesting for Lot. As Abram's herds and flocks multiply, so does Lot's. As Abram's servants work hard to find space for their animals, so does Lot's. So while the land was wonderful, they had too many needs ... the land would not support them both.

So Abram in chapter 13 says to Lot, we need to go our separate ways. *I don't know if this conversation was like a Father telling his adult child "it's time to go" or what but that's what I have in my head.* Abram had every right to choose where to go and tell Lot where he would go but that's not how Abram handled the situation.

V8 – 9 ... **"So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. 9 Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left."**

What a great deal for Lot ... he can determine where he would live, where he would go ... no more following crazy Uncle Abram around! He assesses the options and sees the green plains of the Jordan River and noticed how well watered the land was ... it was literally picturesque. Notice, where he settled ... verse 12 ... **"Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord."**

**Here's our first great truth of the day** ... *you can't live close to the fire and not expect to get burned once in a while!* Lot is given the opportunity to choose where he will go and establish his own personal kingdom and out of all his choices, he chooses what looks shiny and pretty and easiest for his flocks ... and potentially what even sounded like the most fun. It was the logical decision. But ultimately, it was going to take him down a path that would have grave consequences.

**Let's take a look at this personally ...** when you are faced with a major decision, do you make that decision based on faith or logic? Or how about *when you look at some of your*

*greatest challenges in life, were there moments leading into that experience that you realize (in hindsight) that contributed toward that experience? Some times that answer is no – it was just bad luck ... but many times, if we can be honest with ourselves long enough, we will discover decisions made by us or others that directly impacted a “uncertain” experience in your life.*

For Lot, this would be that moment ... he chose the easy, the greener, and the more enjoyable place to live. Here’s what I find fascinating though ... eventually living “near” Sodom wasn’t enough. In chapter 14, there is a battle that takes place between the neighboring kingdoms and Sodom is defeated. It an alliance of 5 nations (including Sodom and Gomorrah) against 4 nations and the 4 kingdoms won – they carried off their plunder: women, men, children and possessions. And look at verse 12 in chapter 14 ... **“They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.”**

No longer was it enough to live “near” Sodom ... Lot and his family now lived “in” Sodom. **Here is our second great truth of the morning ... Sin is always progressive!** Remember, Lot was wealthy. He had so many possessions that he had to move away from his Uncle Abram so we know that living in the city was a choice and likely not a decision based on necessity. His attraction to the greener pastures had grown into a *strong desire to participate* in the wickedness of this great city.

Interestingly enough, Abram gathers his fighting men (318 of them) and pursues the armies who had capture Lot and routed them. Remember, this alliance of armies just defeated 5 kingdoms and now they were being pursued by one man’s personal army and they were defeated. Now watch closely to what happens next:

- > Abram is visited by Melchizedek (King of Salem and Priest of God – and the coolest name in the Bible) and he blessed Abram by saying: **“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.”** (14:19-20) He blesses Abram and praises the Lord. Abram then turns around and gives him a 10<sup>th</sup> of all the plunder they plundered from the plunder. **(think about it)**
- >Next the King of Sodom visits Abram and he says: **“Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.” But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, 23 that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ 24 I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me ... Let them have their share.”** (14:21-24)

Abram wants nothing to do with this guy! Abram understands what this guy is all about. Abram knows his trust is the Lord, God Most High, Creator of Heaven and Earth and there is no way that the King of Sodom is going to have anything to brag about when it comes to Abram’s estate. Not to mention, that when a King offers you something and you don’t take it, you’ve just likely offended and humiliated the King – like a pie in the face.

**And this brings me to my third great truth of the day ... we must HONOR what is HOLY and REJECT what isn’t.** Abram stands toe to toe with the man who is leading the wickedest

kingdom on earth at that time and refuses to enter into any type of agreement with him and he does so on the grounds of his own personal walk with the Lord God.

At the risk of getting us all a little uncomfortable, let me just say this ... too often, I'm afraid our walk with God does not impact our social decisions enough. What's the difference between the speech of a Christian than others? What's the difference between what a Christ follower finds funny and what others find humorous? What's the difference in how we date or treat our spouse or respect others? What's the difference in the size of our homes, the number of our cars, or the amount of our possessions? Too often we, like anyone else in the world, promote and invest our time and resources in things that are far from glorifying God ... in fact, things that actually stand against God ... just think about the TV shows you watch, the movies you pay to go see or rent, or the fact that most of us would take our family out to eat and drop \$50-\$70 for a meal and struggle to consider giving that much to a family in need or even to the church to use to build and advance the kingdom (I expect a thud to come over the crowd at this point).

Why did you have to bring up money, Pastor? Because it's in the story ... Abram was just offered 90% of Sodom's wealth and possessions. It had been plundered and now he was in possession of it – he just hit the jackpot or picked the winning lottery ticket. And Abram recognized that his oath before God was **worth more than any amount of treasure or possession**. That's not necessarily a socially accepted way of thinking.

Too often, money can be our god. Too often the “what's in it for me” way of thinking guides our spending and our giving. It did for Lot – he wanted to live on easy street. But it didn't for Abram who wanted to live on faithful street.

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We need to flash forward in our story to Chapter 19 ... Abram (now called Abraham) has been visited by 3 angels and they let Abraham know they are about to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Two of these angels continue their journey while one stays back to let Abraham negotiate on behalf of the city ... Chapter 19:1 ... **“The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.”**

Interesting note here: the fact that Lot is sitting in the gateway is important. The gateway was the center of government where the ruling council members would carry out their administrative and judicial duties ... and the fact that Lot is said to have been sitting there, indicates that he has become a person of power and influence ... likely a city leader to some degree. Gone are the days of pitching his tent near Sodom. Gone are the days of just being a regular citizen in this wicked place. Today, Lot sits in leadership. Remember, sin is always, always, always progressive.

He greets these guests and opens his house to them and things get crazy from there! (Jewish tradition written in their commentaries known as the Midrash give more details ... apparently Lot's wife refused to show these men/angels any hospitality. Lot demanded that she feed them and serve them and she finally agrees. But with a sinister thought in

mind ... instead of using her own salt to season with (very important culturally) she went to her neighbors to borrow some ... which alerted them that Lot had uninvited guests which then brought men from all over Sodom surrounding Lot's home and demanding that his guests be brought out so they can party with them and have sex with them! Nuts, right? It's get worse. Lot goes out and offers to let the crowd have his 2 daughters instead of giving up these angels. Lot is feeling conviction of the Lord and he is beginning to recognize the condition of his heart and the condition of his city. Panic has struck his heart and mind. Fear is taking over.

He's up all night and it's nearly morning when the angels warned him again to leave. (19:16-17) *When he **hesitated**, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!"*

Lot along with his daughters and wife reach the place of safety in the town of Zoar. (19:24-26) *"Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land. But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."*

**This leads us to our final great truth of the morning** ... *The HEART is ground zero in the battle for your soul!* The angel warned, don't look back. Don't long for your life there. Don't gaze on the memories of your life here and cherish them. Don't let your heart desire the things that grieve the Lord.

But rather, focus on the Lord's provision and grace in your life that has saved you. Long for the things that will lead you toward eternal life – and not temporary satisfaction. Let your life be guided by the will of God for he knows what is ultimately best.

The Hebrew for "looked back" means more than to glance over one's shoulder ... it means to regard, to consider, to pay close attention to. Lot's wife found it impossible to stop longing for the life she had in Sodom and in her gazing back, the Lord struck her down utilizing salt ... the very thing she chose to use as the tool to get rid of the angels in her home.

Lot's wife could not turn from her desires to have her life in Sodom. **What do you need to turn from and not look back on?** What is in your life right now that God is speaking to you about right now that needs to go? What desires do you have that are getting in the way of your walk with God? (substances, bad relationships, ill feelings toward someone, private sexual sins ...) Don't repeat the lesson that Lot's wife learned ... with God's help, you can flee from them, run from them, and desire them no more!

In Luke 9, Jesus says, *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever*

*loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" (9:23-25)*

I would like for you to ask yourself this question today as I ask it of myself: How can I trust God during my personal moments of uncertainty? **Hannah** trusted God with her son. **Abram** trusted God with his wealth and security. **Lot trusted himself** – and in many ways, it ruined him. Yes, he survived the destruction of Sodom, but his life remained a train wreck.

Matthew 6 ... Treasures in heaven ... for where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

How can you trust God during your personal moments of uncertainty?

What act of faith is God seeking from you today?

What risk do you need to take in order to follow after God's BEST for your life?

Can I tell you today that God is enough. Our big homes and our satellite flat screens, our smart phones and fancy cars aren't. God is more than enough. Our TV shows and the actors, artists and athletes we idolize aren't. Our God is enough!

**Stand and Pray ... end by 11:40**

**BENEDICTION PASSAGE:**

As we go from this place, let's go ... not just hoping, but believing! Not just wishing, but trusting, and not with fear, but with confidence. You can trust in God – for his is more than enough ... as Paul writes in Philippians:

"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Phil 4:19-20)