

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

“Sodom: Discovery of a Lost City” Genesis 18:16-21; 19:1-29

Dr. Steven Collins

MAIN IDEA

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is sandwiched between some of the most important passages of the whole Bible. God loves His creation, and the height of that affection is humanity. He created humans to bear His likeness and characteristics so that people would be able to relate to Him. Even after the rebellion of Adam and Eve, God still sought to love, support and task humanity with the care of this world. God delivered promises that ensured blessings on those who followed Him. But given humanity's tendency to rebel, God also gave boundaries and responsibilities to the partnership. These promises were agreements, brokered by God, called *covenants*, what some might call divine contracts. The covenant with Abraham is given and expounded on in Genesis 12, 13, 15 and 17.

Intermingled in the Abraham story is his relationship with his nephew Lot. Choosing to live outside of God's promises. Lot settled in Sodom and Gomorrah, cities that represented humanities' choice to reject God. Genesis 2:17 had been the first warning against rejecting God and his promises. The results of sin were death, or “separation” from God, His creation, and life itself. Sodom was the antithesis to God's plan and promises, and it is woven into the story of Abraham to contrast those who follow God. The whole of the Bible, its message, and the character of God rests in these foundational passages. It is no wonder that this is one of the most contested and dismissed portions of Scripture. While the discovery of the city of Sodom lends to the credibility and historicity of the Bible, more importantly, it reminds us that the promises of God to Abraham were in a real time and place.

SCRIPTURAL INSIGHT

When God's messengers, i.e. angels, visited Lot and warned him of the pending judgment upon Sodom, Lot believed them and sought to rescue his family. Genesis 19:14 records the reaction of his son-in-laws as they dismissed the warning. They thought he was kidding, and laughed (קִטְצָה, *tsachaq*). There is a word play here and between Genesis 17:17 and 18:12. The same Hebrew word for *laughter* is also used for Abraham and Sarah when they each heard God's promise to bless them with a child. God's covenants are often scoffed at by those who dismiss its consequences, but those who follow God should also be careful not to dismiss its blessings.

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together Genesis 18:16-21 & 19:1-29 and discuss applications below.

KEY VERSE

Genesis 18:19 *For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.*”

Questions in Response to the Sodom Narrative:

- You probably haven't had too many discussions about Sodom with your friends or with strangers. This account might seem extreme, and potentially lead people to question God's love and goodness. *How would you go about explaining God's actions in light of what you know of His character?* Read Ezekiel 16:49-50 for some extra insight.
- God promised a redemption plan through His covenant with Abraham. Likewise, Jesus laid out reconciliation to God through His New Covenant (See Jeremiah 31:31-33; Luke 22:19-20) Both covenants have outcomes based on whether they are accepted or not. *What are the blessings of the New Covenant, and what are its curses?*

Questions in Response to Dr. Collin's Presentation:

- *Why are historical-biblical sites in the Holy Land important to people of faith? Many religions have holy sites--what is the proper way vs. improper way to regard them? If you have been to the Holy Land, how did your trip impact your faith?*
- Jesus said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." *What are some of the intangible things of faith that a Christian believes without seeing or touching?*

PRAYER & TESTIMONY

Consider how it has been lately to embrace believing even when you can't see a solution. Spend some time sharing and praying with one another for specific areas where you need God to help your unbelief.

SPIRITUAL APPLICATION & PRACTICE

Take some uninterrupted time this week to talk to God about how you interact with "knowing" in your day-to-day life. *Do you need things to be proven before you believe, approaching people or circumstances with skepticism? Or, do you go to the opposite extreme and swallow everything you hear, lacking discernment? Is there a similar pattern in the way you approach God? What does He have for you in this?* Try journaling your conversation with God and try talking to one other group member about whatever comes up.

RESOURCES

- The Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project is the archeological dig site for what some are calling the ancient city of Sodom. Led by Dr. Steven Collins, one can visit and even participate in the current work. <https://tallelhammam.com>
- *Discovering the City of Sodom: The Fascinating, True Account of the Discovery of the Old Testament's Most Infamous City.* Steven Collins & Latayne Scott. New York: Howard Books, 2013.
- An article regarding Dr. Steven Collins' work at Tall el-Hamman and the possible discovery of the ancient city of Sodom:
<https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/archaeologists-claim-have-discovered-location-biblical-city-sodom-004148>



Community Group Discussion Guide

Based on Dr. Steven Collin's Presentation on October 14, 2018

Watch Again: <https://cccm.com/teaching/topical/video/sodom-discovery-of-a-lost-city/>