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Bible Lesson 7 (BTJ)

1. **Introduction**

God promised Abram that he would have a son through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. Abram believed God's promise and anticipated the arrival of this son. Years went by without Abram and Sarai having any children. Sarai proposed to Abram that they follow a custom of that time and that her servant Hagar would be the one to give birth to Abram's child. That way, they would have an heir. This was not according to God's plan for Abram and Sarai.

Abram agreed to this arrangement though it was not God's plan for them. Ishmael was born and Abram loved him very much. However he was not the promised descendant according to God's plan. Later God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah. God restated his promise to Abram and told him that he and Sarai would give birth to a son within a year. This again shows that in God's timing he truly fulfills his promises.

While Abraham was at Mamre, the Lord appeared to him and disclosed his intention of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. Then Abraham mediated for the righteous in Sodom where his nephew Lot and his family lived. This shows Abraham's faith and understanding of the mercy, grace, and longsuffering of God. Abraham was in a right relationship with God or God would not have listened to him.

Before the Lord destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he sent his angels to Sodom to warn Lot that Sodom was going to be destroyed. The angels led Lot and his family out of the city just before God destroyed it with fire and brimstone. Again, this shows the mercy and grace of God for Lot and his family. Lot had chosen to live in Sodom because that area offered greater potential for prosperity than the area where Abraham lived. When Sodom was destroyed, Lot lost all his possessions. He also lost his wife because she disobeyed God and looked back after they had escaped from Sodom. God judged her disobedience and she was changed into a pillar of salt. Only Lot and his two daughters survived the destruction of Sodom.

This part of the story of Abraham's life shows the faithfulness of God in his dealings with mankind. It teaches about his mercy and grace toward people. It also shows that God will not ignore the wickedness of man. The penalty for sin is death. God requires people to believe in him. But if they reject him, their eternal destiny will be paying for their sins in the never-ending fire of punishment.

2. Review

Edwin: It is good for us to talk about the stories Teacher is teaching us. We are hearing this talk for the first time. When I was young, I did not know these stories. My father and mother did not know them so they could not tell them to us. We were ignorant of God's message to us. We must try to understand them because we need God's mercy and favor so that we can be saved from the guilt and penalty of our sins.

Rachel: I am glad that we are talking about this so all of us can learn more about God. I want all of our children to understand God's message for us.

Edwin: Sometimes it is hard for me to understand everything the first time it is taught. By now I know that I am a sinner and I do not want to go to the never-ending fire of punishment. I believe the Bible stories that Teacher is teaching us.

Rachel: I was working in our garden pulling out the bad grass and weeds that grow so quickly. They keep growing because of God's curse upon the earth when Adam and Eve sinned against him. If they had not sinned, our backs would not hurt from pulling weeds. I saw a snake in our garden and immediately I thought about Satan's lies to Adam and Eve.

Edwin: Satan hates God. That is why he tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God. Satan doesn't want us to listen to this good teaching. He hates us. But, God loves us and this is very good. Whenever God's message shows us that our old beliefs and practices are wrong, we must turn away from them. Satan tries to get us to forget God's message because he wants us to die in our sins.

Rachel: God loves us and wants all of us to believe in him. After hearing these stories, I know all of us are lost and without a way to save ourselves. God judged the wicked people of the past, he will also judge us if we reject his message for us.

Rachel: When Noah and his family came out of the ark, there was no one else around because everyone outside of the ark died in the great flood, right?

Edwin: That's right. Every living thing upon the face of the earth was destroyed by the great flood. No one outside of the ark, whether people, animals or birds, survived the flood. All were destroyed.

Rachel: If all the wicked people were destroyed, why did the people become so wicked again after the earth was repopulated? Didn't Nimrod and his followers know about God's judgment? Where did their wicked living come from?

Edwin: The reason so many people lived wickedly again is because they were born with a sinful nature and they followed it. When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they became wicked. They were no longer perfect. That means when they gave birth to their children, their children were born with a sinful nature, with an internal desire to live wickedly. Satan also tempted them to forget God and to live to please themselves. As they followed their sinful nature and gave in to Satan's temptations, wickedness spread again.

Rachel: God is faithful. Even though people kept on being wicked, God did not forget his promise about sending a Deliverer. That is why he kept Noah and his family alive. He wanted the Deliverer to come through Noah's family so that he would save us from the penalty of our sins. I am anxiously waiting to learn more about the Deliverer because I want to be saved from the penalty of my sins.

Edwin: I too am anxiously waiting to learn more about the Deliverer. As we hear more of the teaching, it becomes evident that God wants people to know him. He wants people to be saved from the penalty of sin and not die in their sinful state. He wants to send the Deliverer to save people from their sin and be set free from following Satan and doing wickedness.

Rachel: Abram was a good man. He believed God's promise that he would have many descendants. He did not doubt God's promise. He just believed what God had spoken to him. He saw all the stars and believed his descendants would be so many that no one could count them because God had said so.

Edwin: Abram showed us a good way. We too need to believe whatever God tells us through his message to us. I like the story about God declaring Abram righteous because he believed the promise God had given to him. That shows me that if we believe God's word like Abram did, then God will declare us righteous too. We must believe all that he says to us through his word.

3. Hagar and Ishmael

It is good to see all of you here today. It is important that you learn more truth about God's work in history. God wants everyone to believe in him. He wants everyone to believe his message for us which is written in the Bible. He wants us to have faith in him like Abram had. He wants us to believe all that he says because he only speaks truth.

Abram and Sarai did not have any children and were getting old. One day Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has prevented me from having children. Take my maid, Hagar, as your wife so that I can have children through her." Sarai's proposition to Abram was an

accepted custom at that time. Since Hagar was Sarai's slave girl, everything she had belonged to her master, Sarai. If she would bear a child, the child would belong to Sarai.

Even though Sarai's proposal was according to an accepted custom in that part of the world, it was not according to God's standard or plan. Sarai was taking matters into her own hand in order to ensure a descendant of Abram be born.

Abram heard Sarai's proposal and agreed to it. He took Hagar as his wife and she gave birth to a son whom she named Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born. Now Abram had a son whom he dearly loved. Was Ismael the descendant God promised to Abram? Was this the son through whom the Deliverer would come?

4. New Names for Abram and Sarai

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord spoke to him again and said. "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly. Behold, my covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."

Notice this point. When God spoke to Abram, he called himself God Almighty. God wanted Abram to know that he was the greatest power of all beings. He was supreme and all-powerful. God changed Abram's name to Abraham and promised that he would become the father of many nations. From here on in the teaching, we will no longer use the name Abram. We will use the name Abraham because God changed his name.

God promised to establish his covenant with Abraham and to give him and his offspring the land of Canaan forever and to be their God forever. God made his covenant to Abraham according to his sovereignty. No one consulted him or encouraged him to do so. Abraham did not do something which obligated God in any way to establish his covenant with him. God acted by his own will and made these promises to Abraham. God chose Abraham to be the instrument through whom he would work in history to send the Deliverer to mankind.

God also gave Sarai a new name. He said to Abraham, Sarai your wife, will no longer be called Sarai. She will have a new name. Sarah will be her name. I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her. When Abraham heard this, he bowed down to the ground before the Lord. However, within himself he laughed in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of 100?" he wondered.

Then Abraham said to God. “May my son Ishmael live under your special blessing?” Abraham thought since Ishmael had been born that he was the one through whom the Deliverer would come. So he asked God about Ishmael. “Would God accept Ishmael or not?” wondered Abraham. God replied, “No, Ishmael will not be your heir. Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son, and you will call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear by you at this time next year.”

By now Abraham and Sarah were very old. Would Sarah give birth to a son as God had said she would? Would she actually have a baby at this old age? Do you think it is possible for Sarah to have a baby at this stage in her life?

5. Abraham at Mamre

Abraham was near the oak grove at Mamre when the Lord appeared to him again. One day as he was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day, he looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. Abraham got up, ran to meet them and welcomed them. He bowed low to the ground and said, “My lord, if it pleases you, stop here for a while. Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. Since you have honored me with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

Abraham told Sarah about the visitors and they prepared food to serve the visitors. As the visitors ate of the food, one of them announced, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Now Sarah, who was in the tent, heard this and laughed wondering how this could be since both of them were so old. The Lord reassured her that as he had spoken so shall it be in spite of the physical obstacles. He asked, “Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”



Show #15: Abraham fed the angels of the Lord at Mamre

The three visitors, who were the Lord and two angels, got up and left from there. Abraham walked along the road with them as they were heading toward Sodom. Then the Lord said to Abraham. “The people who live in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are very wicked. They are guilty of all kinds of sinful living. I am going down to those two cities to see whether or not their wickedness is as bad as the report I heard. I will see for myself their spiritual condition.”

Abraham no doubt had heard about the wickedness of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah and sensed the Lord’s anger toward them. He entreated the Lord and said. “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” Abraham was concerned for his nephew Lot and his family who lived there. That is why he entreated the Lord for mercy for the righteous living in Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Lord replied to Abraham, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.” Hearing the Lord’s reply, Abraham asked him again. “Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will you destroy the whole city because of five?” The Lord said to Abraham, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous persons there.” Then Abraham asked him again, “Suppose there are only forty righteous persons found there? Will you still destroy it?” The Lord said, “If there are forty righteous people there I will not destroy it.”

Then Abraham spoke again. He said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry with me. Will you destroy it if only thirty are found there?” The Lord replied, “I will not do it if I find thirty righteous there.” Again Abraham entreated the Lord and said, “Suppose twenty are found there? Will you destroy it?” The Lord replied, “I will not destroy it on account of the twenty righteous persons.” Then Abraham made one final request and said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry with me. I will speak one more time. Suppose ten righteous persons are found there? Will you still destroy it?” The Lord replied. “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.” Then the Lord departed from Abraham and Abraham returned to his tent.

Why was the Lord going to destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? It was because they were very wicked. They did not think about God and his goodness. They had no time for God and his righteousness. They did not want to learn about God. They did not worship God or honor him in any way. They enjoyed living wickedly and doing many kinds of wicked things.

God was very displeased with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because they enjoyed sinning and turned away from him. God hates sin because it is against him. Satan, the enemy of God, wants people to sin so that they will die in their sins. Satan hates God. He wants people to go to the place of the never-ending fire of punishment.

Why did the people of Sodom and Gomorrah not know about God's good ways? It is because their parents did not teach them about God. They grew up in sinful families. The people who raised them lived very wickedly. Parents and older people taught their children how to be violent, to lie, to steal, and to take advantage of one another. They did not thank God for the sunshine and rain which made their food grow. They did not thank God for anything or worship him. They had no time for God. They just lived for themselves and for pleasure.

Although many people in Sodom and Gomorrah did not know God, they were still guilty for their many sins. Whoever sins against God will have to pay for their sin. God judges people who sin against him. People who do not know God or refuse to worship him will be judged for their wickedness because God does not ignore sin.

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah committed all kinds of kinds of sins and enjoyed sinning. Men engaged in sexual activity with other men. Women had sexual relations with other women. These actions were contrary to the way God had made people but they didn't care. "We can do whatever we want to do with our bodies and no one can stop us," was the attitude of the people.

Others committed fornication and adultery without shame or regret. They thought, "We can live like we want to and do whatever pleases us. No one can tell us what to do." Living sinfully, they ignored God and ignored doing what was right. God saw their sinful living and was greatly displeased with their actions. God wants people to honor and worship him. He wants them to believe in him like Abel and Noah did.

What will God do about this condition? Will God allow the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to go unpunished? Will he ignore their wickedness or will he judge them as he judged the wicked people of Noah's time? Remember this: God does not change. He has one standard for all people.

God is not like us. Sometimes we are upset by something a person does and we condemn them for it. Later, if we do the same thing, we try to justify our action and we want people to agree with us. In other words, as people, sometimes our standards change depending how it affects us. God is not like that. He remains the same all the time and has the same attitude toward wickedness regardless of who is involved.

What else did the people of Sodom and Gomorrah do that displeased God? Let's think about what we see people do today that is wrong. How do people who ignore God live? What do they do? What are they like? People who have no regard for God live to please themselves. They do whatever they want to do. They do not thank God for his goodness of providing good weather for their gardens and crops. They do not think about his good ways. And, they do not think that God will judge them for being wicked. They think that they are okay the way they are.

Abraham knew that God would not tolerate the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. That is why he pleaded with God to not destroy them. He asked God, "Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" God said should there be ten righteous people in Sodom, he would not destroy it. Abraham knew that his nephew Lot and his family lived in Sodom and he was concerned about them. He did not want them to perish. He did not want God to destroy them when he destroyed Sodom.

Abraham returned to his place after the Lord had departed. Perhaps he thought, "The people in Sodom are very evil. They enjoy living wickedly. What will happen to Lot if God destroys them?"

6. The Angels Visit Sodom

The two angels of the Lord left Abraham and went to Sodom. They arrived at Sodom in the evening and Lot was sitting at the gate of Sodom. Lot saw the two angels so he got up and went to meet them. He bowed himself before them and said, "Stay here, my lords, spend the night in my house. In the morning, you can be on your way again." Lot wanted to show kindness and hospitality to them.

The angels replied to Lot, "No, we will spend the night in the open square." Lot did not want them to stay in the village square overnight. "You must spend the night in my house," Lot insisted. Because Lot insisted, the angels agreed to stay with him and entered his house. Lot provided a feast for the angels and set it before them to eat. They received the food he set before them and ate of it.

In the evening, before Lot and the angels retired to sleep, men, young and old, from the city of Sodom came to Lot's house and surrounded it. They called to Lot and said, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!" Lot stepped outside his house and closed the door behind him. "No," he said. "Please do not do such a wicked thing, my brothers." Lot did not want these wicked men to engage his visitors in sinful behavior.

The men of Sodom became insistent. “Stand back!” they shouted. “Lot, you came to town as an outsider, and now you are acting like our judge! We’ll treat you far worse than those other men!” And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door so they could engage in their wicked deeds. The angels were still inside the house. They opened the door, reached out and pulled Lot into his house and bolted the door. Then they exercised their power and blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of Lot’s house. Being blinded, they could not find the doorway so they gave up trying to get inside. Such was the wickedness of the people in Sodom. They had no time for God. They just lived in sin and enjoyed their wickedness.

Inside Lot’s house the angels questioned him saying. “Do you have any other relatives here in the city? You need to get them out of this place now! Get your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or any other relatives and leave now. We are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the LORD, and he has sent us to destroy it.”

Lot was terrified when he heard that God was going to destroy Sodom. He rushed out to tell the young men who were his future sons-in-law. “Quick, get out of the city!” said Lot. “The LORD is about to destroy it.” Lot urgently tried to persuade his future sons-in-law to leave the city. The young men, however, did not listen to Lot. They thought he was only joking so they didn’t heed Lot’s urgent plea.

7. Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

The next morning, at dawn, the angels became insistent and said to Lot. “Hurry up. Get out of here now. Do not wait. Take your wife and your two daughters who are here with you and get out right now. If you do not go right away, you too will be caught in the destruction of the city!”

The angels’ warnings were clear to Lot. However, he hesitated to leave right away. Then the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and they rushed them to safety outside the city. God was being very merciful to Lot. When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered them, “Run for your lives! And don’t look



Show #16: Lot and his daughters fleeing from destruction

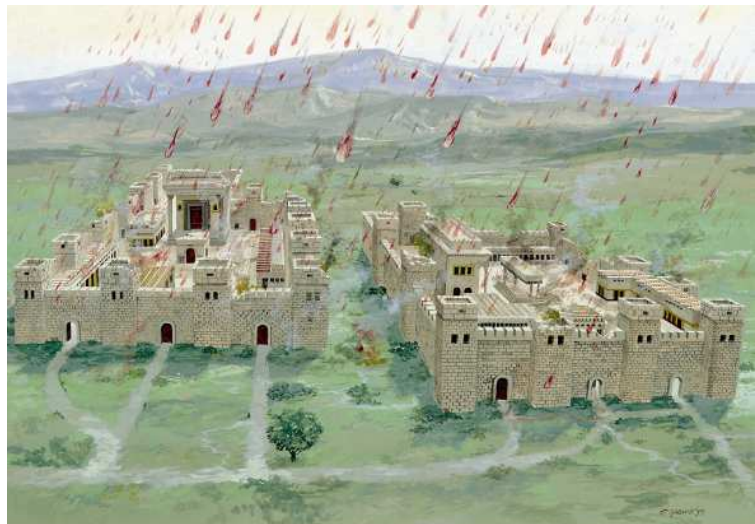
back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!” God was about to execute his judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

“Oh no, my lord!” Lot begged. “You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness to me. However, I cannot go to the mountains. If I go to the mountains, I won’t survive. I will soon die. See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don’t you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved.” By now Lot and his family should have been running as fast as they could go because within minutes judgment would fall upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

The angel heard Lot’s plea and said, “I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village. But hurry! Go now! Escape to that little town, Zoar. I cannot destroy this place until you arrive there.” Lot and his family quickly left for Zoar. By the time they arrived there, the sun was already shining over the land. It must have been a very beautiful morning in that area.

By now, the people of Sodom were up and about their daily activities. The sun was shining as usual. The people were not thinking about God, much less about God’s judgment upon them, sinners whose exceeding wickedness would in a moment be judged. Then without warning, God rained brimstone, burning stones, and fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy them. God’s power made the burning stones and fire fall from heaven like a torrential rainfall.

As the brimstone and fire fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, the people ran for cover. There was no place to go for protection. All the buildings and property was burning. Nothing escaped the fire and brimstone. All of the people and every living thing burned to



Show #17: God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah

death. All of the people, every living thing and all the property was destroyed by the brimstone and fire. On that day, God’s righteous judgment destroyed that wicked place. God’s power destroyed everyone and everything in Sodom and Gomorrah. No one escaped the burning brimstone and fire from heaven. Remember this: The evening before, wicked men from the city wanted to sin with the angels. They were indignant that Lot

would not allow it to happen. The angels then struck these wicked men with blindness and the next day they were destroyed and burned with fire and brimstone.

Lot had also warned his future sons-in-law of God's judgment but they just laughed at him. "Nothing will happen to us," they jeered. When the fire and brimstone began to fall, it was too late to escape God's judgment. Time on this earth was over for them. All of these wicked people went to the place of the never-ending fire of punishment. They are still there in torment even though this happened a long, long time ago. Will these people ever be saved from this awful fire? No, they will never be saved from it. Remember, they had no time for God while they lived upon this earth, before they were destroyed. God's judgment was his punishment upon them for ignoring him and living wickedly. Remember this: Sin's payment is death.

The angel had clearly forbidden Lot or anyone with him to look back as they fled from Sodom. They were to flee from Sodom and keep looking ahead. But Lot's wife didn't obey the angel's commandment. As they were going, she was following Lot. Then she turned around to see what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Right away God judged her for disobeying him and she turned into a pillar of salt. She had heard the angel's strict commandment to not look back but decided to look anyway. She did what she wanted to do and right away God's power turned her body into a pillar of salt. Remember this: God expects his commandments to be followed every time.

The day before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Abraham had pleaded with God to spare them for the sake of the righteous in Sodom. He hoped the Lord would not destroy it for Lot's sake. Then he returned to his tents and was there the rest of the day.

The next morning, Abraham arose early and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD. Then he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley. What did Abraham see? Abraham saw the smoke of the land going up like columns of smoke from a huge furnace. Then he knew that there were not ten righteous people in Sodom and God had destroyed it as he said he would. Though God destroyed Sodom, he had remembered Lot, and had him sent out of Sodom before he totally destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and the surrounding area.

God wants everyone to think about his judgment upon the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They experienced a horrible death because they lived wickedly without any regard for God. God judged them for their wickedness. People who refuse to worship God will die in their sins and go to the place of the never-ending fire of punishment.

God wants you to be like Abraham and believe in him. Are you like Abraham? Do you

believe in God or not? God wants you to believe what the Bible teaches us. Do not be like the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah. They did not think about God and lived very wickedly. God destroyed them for their wickedness. All those people died in their sinful condition because they rejected God. Do not be like them. Be like Abraham who believed God and trusted him to keep his promises. Because Abraham believed in God, God declared him a righteous person. He forgave him of the guilt and penalty of his sins.

8. After the Meeting

Setting: After the teaching session was over, everyone was very sober. The thought of being destroyed by God as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed was very sobering. Then Greg spoke to everyone.

Greg: Please listen to me. Tonight we heard about God's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. What does that mean for us? Are we like them or not?

Patrick: I was shaking in fright when Teacher talked about the fire and brimstone coming down like heavy rain upon all of those people. No one escaped. We too are guilty of sinning against God. Before these meetings, I did not think about God. I lived for good food and fun. I lived many years without giving any thought to God or the afterlife. Now I know that I'm a sinner. I need help. I need God's mercy and grace to keep me alive.

Greg: If we think that we are better than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, we are deceiving ourselves. All of our lives we have lived for ourselves. We did whatever pleased us. We lived for lots of food and good times. We are just as bad as those people.

Patrick: Sometimes when I saw that someone had robbed some produce from my garden I would get very angry. I cursed people who I thought robbed me even though I didn't know who did it. Later I did the same to someone else and lied about it. I am as guilty of sinning as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were. I need God's mercy or I will die in my sins.

Greg: Did you hear what happened to Lot's possessions? All of them were destroyed by the fire and brimstone from heaven. Now he had nothing. On the other hand, Abraham who followed God, still had his flocks and herds. Lot was selfish when he chose the best land for himself but he lost everything. How many times have we lusted for more possessions? How many times have we been greedy? How many times did we try to be richer than someone else? We did all of that just to have a big name. How foolish of us to live without thinking about God.

Patrick: There is something else we need to talk about. We like to make everyone think

that we do not live immoral lives. We deceive ourselves because we know very well that we are always looking for a way to get away with it. When we walk around in the village, we want the women to see us. And we lust after them. We lust after the wives of our best friends and commit adultery and we just hide it like nothing happened. Do we know that kind of behavior is wrong? Yes, we do but we still just behave wickedly. I need God's mercy and grace or I will die in my sins. I am afraid of dying and going to the never-ending fire of punishment.

Greg: I like the story about Abraham because he was a good man who believed God. We need to be like him. We need to quit thinking about ourselves. We need to think hard about the message Teacher is bringing to us. If we respond to God like Abraham did, God will help us with this guilt that we carry. I feel like I am carrying a heavy load. Look. I have nothing in my hands yet I feel like something heavy is on me. I know that the stories we are hearing about God are true. He alone can take away this heavy guilt.

Patrick: All of us are carrying that same kind of a load. We need God's help, his mercy and grace or we will all go to the place of the never-ending fire. We need to keep discussing these lessons so that we will learn them well.

Patrick: I have a thought about Lot's wife which applies to us. Did Lot's wife truly obey the angel's command to not turn around and look toward Sodom? No, she didn't. Even though the angel was leading her away from destruction, she disobeyed God's command given to her through the angel. Right now Teacher is instructing us about God. We must believe everything that we are learning from the Bible or we will be just like Lot's wife and God will not deliver us from our guilt and weight of sin.

Greg: Are we like Lot's unbelieving wife or are we like Abraham? Remember, we cannot be on two roads at once. It is impossible to believe God like Abraham did and disobey God like Lot's wife did at the same time. We must choose to obey God always. Even when we our old ways try to keep us from accepting God's message, we must keep on believing the Bible story.

Patrick: It is late. We have talked a long time but I cannot sleep. I'm tired but I cannot sleep because of the awfulness that happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. I need God to be merciful to me. All of us need God's mercy so that he will not judge us right now. We need to hear the rest of the Bible's teachings.

9. **Review of the Lesson's Themes**

God is omnipotent and can do what is humanly impossible: Although Abraham and Sarah were very old and childless, God's promise that they would have a descendant through whom the Deliverer would come was not an empty promise. Because God is all-powerful, he is able to fulfill all of his promises.

God communicates with man: God wants people to know him and wants them to know how they should serve him. God makes his will known to mankind. God is not capricious. He is not a trickster. He discloses what he wants people to know

God is personal: God has a personal interest in all people. He is not distant, unreliable or unknowable. God wants people to know him and to trust him because he is real, alive, knowable and interested in everyone. Notice how he spoke to Abraham (Abram) and Sarah (Sarai) and disclosed his plans for them.

Man has an innate desire to sin and needs God's help for deliverance: People need God's mercy and grace to save them from sin's consequence of eternal death. No humanly devised way can provide this for mankind. Man is a helpless sinner and needs God's help for salvation.

God is loving, merciful, gracious, and longsuffering: However, God does not ignore sin and wickedness. God expects people to respond positively to him because of his goodness to them. Though he withholds judgment, if people do not believe in him, he will judge them.

God is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent: God knows everything, he is everywhere-present, and he is all-powerful. It is futile for anyone to think that God does not know of one's wrongdoings. God knows every thought of every person all the time.

God is faithful, he does not change or vacillate: It is important to stress the fact that God is unchangeable. He is not fickle nor can he be tricked. His standards do not change nor does he have different standards for some people. God expects that every person believes in him. He will forgive the sins of anyone who believes in him. All who do not believe in him will pay for their own sins by their death. All who die separated from God will go to the never-ending fire of punishment.

10. Students Practice Telling the Stories

At the end of this lesson, practice telling the story you have just heard to each other. Everyone needs to practice teaching Bible lessons by telling the stories.

Practice telling the stories of this lesson in pairs. One pair should teach one of the stories in the lesson following this lesson's Table of Contents for divisions in the lessons.

The Table of Contents at the beginning of the lesson lists the stories for each lesson. Some of the stories or sections of a story are short so they should be combined with another section to make the exercise of practicing to teach by using stories a profitable exercise.

When you are teaching a lesson by telling the story, use culturally appropriate questions and illustrations to keep the story interesting and to make the people think about the lesson's meanings. Be prepared to engage the audience with questions which are crafted to bring out how well they understand the meaning of the story.

Use visual aids or objects used in the lesson when you teach a story. Show the pictures at the right time in the story. When illustrations are used, be sure to bring them to a right and logical conclusion. If you do not make the right conclusions through telling the story, people will likely guess what it means and they could easily come to a wrong conclusion.

After you have practiced telling stories to each other, talk about ways to improve your story-telling ability. Be open to critique and be kind to each other as you work together to help each other become master story-tellers. The goal of teaching God's Word via telling Bible stories is not to merely impress your peers; it is the salvation of spiritually lost people.

11. Teaching Tips for Teachers

Lesson Point #2: The story of Ishmael's birth is real history. Teach it as such. Be aware that some people, depending upon their cultural background, may take this historical account to mean that God approves of a man having more than one wife. It does not support this practice. Even though Abraham (Abram at that time) worshiped God, at times he made mistakes in judgment.

Lesson Point #3: God gave new names to Abram and Sarai when it was time for their promised descendant to be born. At this time, God wanted them to know that they would have a son just like he had promised. God works in his way and in his time.

Lesson point #4: When you are teaching about God's promise concerning Sarah having a baby, engage the audience in discussion and ask them to say why (or why not) this would be possible. How will God resolve the tension between his promise that they would have a son and the reality that Sarah was barren and past the age of bearing children? On what basis can a person believe this promise? Give the people time to answer even if it takes them time to reply.

Stress that Abraham was not arrogant when he asked God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous persons. Abraham understood that God was righteous and that he dealt with sin righteously. Abraham also knew that God was merciful, gracious, and longsuffering. Abraham appealed to God for the benefit of Lot and his family. Abraham knew that God would make the right decision about Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lesson Point #5: Lot lived in a wicked, worldly environment. Though he prospered materially and had possessions, it came at a cost and was lost in the end. The angels' rescue of Lot and his family is a clear demonstration of God's mercy, grace, and longsuffering on their behalf. Lot did not earn deliverance from destruction. God gave it to Lot because he believed in God.

Lesson Point #6: God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because all of the people were exceedingly wicked and had no time for him. Sin's payment is death. The fire and brimstone destroyed their physical bodies and as they died, their spirits went to the never-ending fire of punishment. Lot's wife perished because she did not obey the command to not look back upon Sodom and Gomorrah being destroyed. Only Lot and his two daughters were spared. Point out that right now is the time to believe in God and all that the Bible teaches. To procrastinate believing in God's message risks dying before being saved from sin's guilt and penalty.

12. To the Honorable Teacher

If any part of this lesson is misunderstood, go over that part again. Play that part of the lesson again. Summarize that part briefly for the students then play that part a second time. Then ask questions to ascertain whether or not this part of the lesson is now understood correctly.

Be prepared to use proper illustrations to clarify a given lesson point. Sometimes it is helpful to use a picture and talk about what is portrayed in the picture as you teach.

Stress to the students that the important themes of this lesson must be understood before proceeding to the next lesson.

Simple drama can be useful to make a point clearer in the people's minds. Before using drama, be sure that it is culturally appropriate to do so. If people are not accustomed to understanding simple drama, it may be best to not use it.