

A Lot of Tough Love

Bible Study • Leader Guide

Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, You must be frustrated with the way Your children behave; just like a parent watching their children make poor choices over and over. Please help discipline us with a loving hand as we try to follow Your way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Have you ever tried to divide the last piece of cake evenly for two youngsters to eat? If one child chooses first, they will undoubtedly eye both pieces carefully and choose what they perceive to be the larger one. Depending on the nature of the child, they may taunt their sibling with "I got the bigger piece." Then mom tries to put a lid on the impending squabble. Ugh!

God is a parent, too. God is often called "Father" in Scripture.

In the passages below, who is speaking? What are they saying about God's fatherhood?

Psalm 68:5

David. God is the father to the fatherless and protector of widows.

Isaiah 9:6

Isaiah. God is the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Romans 1:7

Paul. He sends greetings of grace and peace in the name of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Throughout all the books Paul authored in the New Testament, he references God as Father thirty times!)

James 1:27

James. Those who keep religion undefiled before God the Father help orphans and widows in the world.

1 John 5:1

John. Loving the Father means loving the Son and all the children of the world.

This study will walk us through the life of Lot (Genesis 13, 14, 18, and 19) and how God used tough love with him and his family as we might with our own families. Similar to the dividing of the last piece of cake, Lot and Abram needed to split the land between them because they had outgrown it with the large herds they possessed.

Which piece of land did Lot choose?

Genesis 13:8–11

Lot chose the Jordan Valley because it was like a garden and well-watered.

Uncle Abram, being a good father-figure, was fine with Lot's decision. However, Lot unknowingly put himself in harm's way because a war broke out among the neighboring kings. Lot was captured.

Who came to Lot's rescue?

Genesis 14:12–16

Abram took 318 men and retrieved Lot and all his possessions from his captors.

Have you ever needed to go rescue a child? Describe the experience. Would you take all the resources at your disposal to make sure they were safe again? _____

As an adult with more life experiences, we can often foresee trouble in the path of young ones that they cannot see. In Genesis, Lot settled in Sodom which was not the smoothest move since it was a seat of depravity.

The Lord visited Abraham (Genesis 18:1), and in the midst of their visit, Abraham was told that the next stop was to check on Sodom and Gomorrah.

What was the plan?

Gen. 18:20–21

The plan was to discover if the outcry in the cities was as bad as it sounded.

What did Abraham attempt in order to prevent the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Genesis 18:27–33

Abraham begged the Lord to save the cities, whittling his request down to finding at least ten righteous people there. God agreed if there were ten righteous people, He would spare the cities.

Have you ever negotiated on the behalf of someone you loved in order to try to keep them out of trouble? Did it work? _____

To give Lot some credit, he does not seem to fall in with all the debauchery surrounding him in Sodom. You can almost hear him saying, “Don’t worry. I won’t fall into temptation here,” somewhat like a student going off to a college known as a party school. When the angel visitors arrive, Lot offers them food and shelter to protect them from the crowd. So far so good.

But when the crowd insists on harming them, who does Lot offer to them instead?

Genesis 19:8.

He offers his two daughters.

No one will be granting Lot a “father of the year” award for that idea. Thankfully, the angels take control of the situation.

What do they do?

Genesis 19:10–11

They pull Lot back into the house for his own safety and blind the potential intruders so they cannot break into the house.

Being told that his household must leave town immediately, Lot drags his feet. First, he tries to get his daughters’ boyfriends on board, but they think he is joking and do not move.

Lot still does not get his family going, so what do the angels do?

Genesis 19:16–18

The angels physically seize them and take them outside the city. The angels tell them to escape to the hills and not to look back.

Notice that seizing Lot and his family was an act of mercy. Do you ever tell your family they have to get moving when the words seem to fall on deaf ears and you need to take some action? Those who refuse to move, the intended husbands for the daughters, perish in the destruction of the city.

Even after Lot is basically thrown out of the city for his own safety, he makes another request. Lot does not want to go to the woods and asks to settle in Zoar, another nearby town.

Why does he say he wants to go there?

Genesis 19:19–20

He thinks he will die if left in the hills, so the little city of Zoar seems a nice alternative. It is close but will not be destroyed.

Does Lot end up settling in Zoar after being given permission to do so?

Genesis 19:30

No, he was afraid.

Have you ever known a child who begged for a new toy and once they received it, lost interest in it? The “it seemed like a good idea at the time” syndrome has been around forever, it seems. Although Genesis does not tell us why Lot was not happy in Zoar, not settling there causes more problems. His daughters think they are all alone with their father and must start their own clan, and then devise another ungodly plot to populate it (Genesis 19:31–38).

The Moabites and the Ammonites became the nations descended from this line.

What were their interactions like with the Israelites years later?

Ezra 9:1

They intermingled and caused abominations before the Lord.

If God is our Father, how should we behave?

Malachi 2:10

We should not be faithless nor profane.

Does God want to punish us?

No

As a parent, we do not want to punish our children either, but we are instructed to properly train them. (Proverbs 22:6)

God’s training for us is the same, and He does so in perfect love. Read the passages below about how much the Father loves you.

John 16:27 *for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.*

1 Peter 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

A loving lesson for all God's children is found in Colossians 1:10–14. **(Fill in the blanks.)**

*So as to walk in a manner worthy of the **Lord**, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in **the knowledge of God**. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all **endurance and patience with joy**; giving thanks to the **Father**, who has qualified you to **share in the inheritance** of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and **transferred us** to the kingdom of his **beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the **forgiveness of sins**.*

Closing Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we know we are far from perfect children and we need Your constant guidance and protection. Thank You for being merciful and patient with us as we daily try to follow You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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