

# Serving God In An Immoral Society, Part 1

## Genesis 18-19

### I. The Portrait Of A Servant Of God (18:1-33)

#### A. Serve Your God By Ministering To \_\_\_\_\_ (18:1-8)

1. **Servanthood** \_\_\_\_\_ **The Person Of Christ Through Serving Others**  
(Gen 18:1-2; cf. Mt 25:40; 10:42; Prov 19:17; Col 3:23-24)

2. **Servanthood** \_\_\_\_\_ **The Heart Of Christ** (Gen 18:2-7; cf. Phil 2:3-4)

**Philippians 2:3-4** <sup>3</sup>Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- a. **Alert** (Gen 18:2) – lifted up eyes and looked – Abraham kept his eyes out for opportunities to serve God
- b. **Eager** (2) – he ran, (6) quickly made bread, (7) ran to prepare calf
- c. **Humble** (2; cf. Mk 10:45; Phil 2:5-8) – he bowed down to the ground
- d. **Sacrificial** (4-8) – drink, washed feet, gave rest, fed, made fresh bread, prepared a tender calf, curds and milk

#### B. Serve Your Family By Leading Them To \_\_\_\_\_ (18:9-21)

**Genesis 18:19** For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way (*drk*) of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

**Genesis 18:14** Is anything too hard for the Lord?

#### C. Serve Your Community By \_\_\_\_\_ For Their Salvation (18:22-33; cf. 2 Pet 3:9)

### Conclusion:

- 1. Are you a servant of God and others or seeking to be served by God and others? (Mt 20:28)
- 2. Are you leading your family to faith in God or faith in ourselves?
- 3. Are you praying for the salvation of your neighbors and the world? <http://www.operationworld.org>

# Serving God In An Immoral Society, Part 1

## Genesis 18-19

### I. The Portrait Of A Servant Of God (18:1-33)

#### A. Serve Your God By Ministering To Others (18:1-8)

1. **Servanthood Serves The Person Of Christ Through Serving Others** (Gen 18:1-2; cf. Mt 25:40; 10:42; Prov 19:17; Col 3:23-24)
2. **Servanthood Parallels The Heart Of Christ** (Gen 18:2-7; cf. Phil 2:3-4)

**Philippians 2:3-4** <sup>3</sup>Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- a. **Alert** (Gen 18:2) – lifted up eyes and looked – Abraham kept his eyes out for opportunities to serve God
- b. **Eager** (2) – he ran, (6) quickly made bread, (7) ran to prepare calf
- c. **Humble** (2; cf. Mk 10:45; Phil 2:5-8) – he bowed down to the ground
- d. **Sacrificial** (4-8) – drink, washed feet, gave rest, fed, made fresh bread, prepared a tender calf, curds and milk

#### B. Serve Your Family By Leading Them To Faith (18:9-21)

**Genesis 18:19** For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way (*drk*) of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

**Genesis 18:14** Is anything too hard for the Lord?

#### C. Serve Your Community By Interceding For Their Salvation (18:22-33; cf. 2 Pet 3:9)

### Conclusion:

1. Are you a servant of God and others or seeking to be served by God and others? (Mt 20:28)
2. Are you leading your family to faith in God or faith in ourselves?
3. Are you praying for the salvation of your neighbors and the world? <http://www.operationworld.org>

# Serving God In An Immoral Society, Part 1

## Genesis 18-19

### Introduction:

- One of the most humbling acts in history was when President Lincoln had to manage the ego of Gen. George B. McClellan. McClellan boasted of being a great military leader, but in reality, he was a poor strategist and not aggressive. Lincoln thought that by commissioning McClellan as "General-in-Chief, that McClellan might be motivated.

When Lincoln hoped for some communication from him, he went with two of his staff members to visit this man nicknamed "Young Napoleon." When McClellan was found to be at a wedding, they waited an hour for him. When McClellan returned, he ignored the president and went to bed.

Lincoln's associates were livid, but Lincoln merely arose and headed home. He commented "This is no time to be making points of etiquette and personal dignity. I would hold McClellan's horse if he will only bring us success."

- Dr. A.B. Simpson: "Not many rivers flow into the sea. Most rivers run into other rivers. The best workers are not those who demand a separate sphere of influence and prestige for themselves, but are [those who are] content to empty their streams of blessing into other rivers."

### I. The Portrait Of A Servant Of God (18:1-33)

#### A. Serve Your God By Ministering To Others (18:1-8)

<sup>1</sup> And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> He lifted up his eyes and **looked**, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he **ran** from the tent door to meet them and **bowed** himself to the earth <sup>3</sup> and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup> Let a little **water** be brought, and **wash** your feet, and **rest** yourselves under the tree, <sup>5</sup> while I bring a morsel of **bread**, that you may **refresh** yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." <sup>6</sup> And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." <sup>7</sup> And Abraham **ran** to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who **prepared it quickly**. <sup>8</sup> Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And **he stood by them** under the tree while they ate.

- Every servant of God had their own Bed & Breakfast
- OT - Abraham, Rebekah, Manoah, the Shunnamite woman and Job operated B&B's from their own homes to traveling strangers
- NT - Matthew, Zaccheas, Mary & Martha, Lydia, Aquila & Priscilla, Phoebe, Philemon & Onesiphorus also practiced hospitality with free Bed & Breakfast as their ministry to God
- Hospitality is a lost art
- Hospitality = Gr. *xenophilia* = loving strangers

**Q:** Do you use your home to help entertain missionaries, traveling pastors, and other servants?

- Hospitality is a priority in the Middle East
- Ie/ Tajikistan – poverty, but save best foods for guests
- Ie/ Hong Kong & Japan – stayed with missionaries

**1. Servanthood Serves The Person Of Christ Through Serving Others** (Gen 18:1-2; cf. Mt 25:40; 10:42; Prov 19:17; Col 3:23-24)

**Special Guests:**

- 2 angels and the Lord – probably Jesus Christ in a Christophany
- the Lord was in the midst of these visitors
- Jesus said if you give someone water, you're giving it to Him

**Matthew 25:40** And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

**Matthew 10:42** And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded. (NLT)

**Proverbs 19:17** Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

**Colossians 3:23-24** <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

**2. Servanthood Parallels The Heart Of Christ** (Gen 18:2-7; cf. Phil 2:3-4)

**Philippians 2:3-4** <sup>3</sup>Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- a. Alert** (Gen 18:2) – lifted up eyes and looked – Abraham kept his eyes out for opportunities to serve God
- If our eyes are focused on our ego and self-advancement, we won't take humble opportunities to sacrifice our time, money and resources towards others
  - Did you come to church today asking how you would be ready to serve?
- b. Eager** (2) – he ran, (6) quickly made bread, (7) ran to prepare calf
- Do we pause before servanthood to ask how will this benefit me or will it cost too much?
  - Or do we run eagerly for opportunities to serve?
  - Needs at church: hospitality, child care, evangelism, teaching, nursery
- **Relinquish Selfish Ambition**

- we're taught from our culture and traditions to seek after prestigious occupation, material wealth, and a power base of reputable acquaintances
- Our life focus is on *selfish ambition*.
- The question is do you serve Christ at work?
  - faithful in service, not being eye-pleasers when the boss is working
  - work for the success of your company and boss
  - seek opportunities to share Christ with your employers
- Do you serve Christ at school?
  - Do you study hard so you can glorify God with your best efforts?
  - Study hard to see what doors God will open for you in future endeavors
- Do we seek compensation?
- Do we ask for praise?
- Does it matter to us if we don't get a "Thank you"?

**c. Humble (2) – he bowed down to the ground**

- Too often, those of us in the ministry can easily focus on pastoral authority than being a servant to others
- When we start to divide the church into the clergy and laity, then there is this sense that the clergy is higher and more important than the laity
- I had to learn, as a young pastor, that ministry is not about power and knowledge, but humility and wisdom

**Mark 10:45** <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**Philippians 2:5-8** <sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup>who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup>but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

- "It meant a laying aside of glory (the real kenosis); a voluntary restraint of power; and acceptance of hardship, isolation, ill-treatment, malice, and misunderstanding; finally, a death that involved such agony —spiritual, even more than physical...it meant love to the uttermost for unlovely men, who 'through his poverty, might become.'" (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 55)
- "The humiliation or self-emptying of Christ means that his preincarnate glory was veiled." (Robert Lightner, *Handbook of Evangelical Theology*, p. 84)
- "Lowliness of mind" (Phil 2:3b) – not expecting from others service

- Lorne Sanny, a past president of the Navigators ministry organization that publishes *Discipleship Journal*, was once asked by a businessman, how he could know when he had a servantlike attitude. His answer was "By how you act when you are treated like one."

d. **Sacrificial** (4-8) – drink, washed feet, gave rest, fed, made fresh bread, prepared a tender calf, curds and milk

- There was a significant generosity on his part
- **Philippians 2:4b** "looking for the interest of others"
- IE/ Doctor receive phone call on an evening with a howling cold wind and a chilling rain. The caller said his wife needed urgent medical attention. The doctor was understanding. "I'll be glad to come, but my car is being repaired" he said. "Could you come and get me?" There was indignation at the other end of the phone as the angry voice sputtered "What, in this weather?"

## B. **Serve Your Family By Leading Them To Faith (18:9-21)**

<sup>9</sup> They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." <sup>10</sup> The Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. <sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" <sup>13</sup> The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." <sup>15</sup> But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh." <sup>16</sup> Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. <sup>17</sup> The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, <sup>18</sup> seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? <sup>19</sup> **For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.**" <sup>20</sup> Then the Lord said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, <sup>21</sup> I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know."

- The Lord tells Abraham that in at the same time next year, Abraham and Sarah will have a son
- Sarah, who was listening at the tent door, laughed because it made no human sense to

**Genesis 18:12** So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"

- She's 89 years old at this point
- Her body is worn out
- His body is worn out

- “pleasure” = conception, delight – probably refers to barrenness
- Sarah had a disease – it was called **Pragmatism**
  - Pragmatism is a reliance on whatever we observe that works
  - She relied on medical observation that older women can’t have children
  - V. 11 – “the way of women had ceased” = no longer experience the cycle that women experience
- Ie/ I’m so glad for several who have come to encourage our Young At Heart who might have the same doubts as Sarah that God can do the impossible through them
- God has called Abraham to the task of leading his family to faith

**Genesis 18:19** For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way (*drk*) of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

- **Every father has the call to:**
  - **Command his children and household to keep the way of the Lord**
    - Doing righteousness
    - Doing justice
      - Bruce Waltke: “Righteousness portrays a way of living in community that promotes the life of all its members, a life promoting social order I recognition of God’s rule (see 6:9). A righteous person rightly orders community, and a just one restores broken community, especially by punishing the oppressor and delivering the oppressed.” (*Genesis*, p. 269)
  - **Prepare his children and household to rely on and receive God’s promises**
    - To prepare the family to receive the promises of God given in the Abrahamic Covenant
  - Eugene Merrill: “The way *`dereK* is ... the whole course of life lived in conformity to covenant obligation.” (“*drk*”, *NIDOTTE*, 1:989)
- As a father or mother, what are we calling our children too?
  - Pragmatism?
    - Education has worked for personal advancement
    - Certain jobs bring financial security
    - Politics has worked for national advancement
  - Is church and God merely an extra-curricular activity to balance out your kid’s college transcript?
  - Or is God a priority?
- Ie/ Japan – a very successful country with the island mentality that all they need is self-contained – they don’t need anything from the outside – especially God
  - Japanese pragmatism is rooted in self-reliance, hard work, ingenuity
  - That’s why the Gospel is so difficult to penetrate that country

- **The Gospel will be difficult to penetrate the heart of our children if our subtle pragmatism teaches them to:**
  - **Trust their own ability, not God's sovereignty**
  - **Rely on our own morality (because our kids are good and nice), rather than confess our sinfulness before a holy God**
  - **Depend on education, not God's Word**
  - **Depend on money, not God's provision**

**Genesis 18:14** Is anything too hard for the Lord?

- When is the last time we had that talk with our spouse who is discouraged?
- When is the last time we had that talk with our kids who feel the weight of performance anxiety?
- When your family goes through hard times

### C. **Serve Your Community By Interceding For Their Salvation (18:22-33)**

<sup>22</sup> So the men turned from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Then Abraham drew near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup> Suppose there are **fifty** righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" <sup>26</sup> And the Lord said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

<sup>27</sup> Abraham answered and said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. <sup>28</sup> Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find **forty-five** there." <sup>29</sup> Again he spoke to him and said, "Suppose **forty** are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." <sup>30</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose **thirty** are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." <sup>31</sup> He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord. Suppose **twenty** are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." <sup>32</sup> Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose **ten** are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." <sup>33</sup> And the Lord went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.

- Abraham is invited by God to intercede on behalf of his neighbors in Sodom and Gomorrah, an immoral place
- We now see Abraham as not only a man of faith, but a man of compassion
- But we also see God being a compassionate God – who must judge but would prefer to give mercy
  - God spared Rahab (Josh 2)
  - God spared Ninevah, Assyria's capital (Jonah 3-4)
  - God spared Israel (Ezek 14:12-20)

**Genesis 13:12-13** <sup>12</sup> Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. <sup>13</sup> Now the **men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.**

- Our world is headed towards the wickedness of Sodom & Gomorrah
- And it's got to hurt us
- It's tough being a witness in this world.
- It's hard telling others that we're Christians
- Don't be afraid to join your Christian club at school or have a Bible study at work
- Many won't like to hear about your Savior
- Charles Spurgeon said, "If they [lost sinners] will not hear you speak, they cannot prevent your praying. Do they jest at your exhortations? They cannot disturb you at your prayers. Are they far away so that you cannot reach them? Your prayers can reach them. Have they declared that they will never listen to you again, nor see your face? Never mind, God has a voice which they must hear. Speak to Him, and He will make them feel. Though they now treat you spitefully, rendering evil for your good, follow them with your prayers. Never let them perish for lack of your supplications" (Metropolitan Pulpit, vol. 18, 263–64). *Cited by Wiersbe, Warren W. (2010-01-01). Be Obedient (Genesis 12-25): Learning the Secret of Living by Faith (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 97). David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.*
- Abraham asks God to spare the city for 50-45-40-30-20-10 righteous remnants in that immoral place
  - 50 people have the opportunity to repent of their sin and get right with God.
  - God lessens the number 5 more times at the bargaining of Abraham
  - But God is always willing to forgive

**2 Peter 3:9** The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. (NLT)

- Going to Japan and Hong Kong has helped me pray better for the lost and the missionaries and pastors serving in those regions
- Europe last year, South Africa 2 years ago – different cultures, but the same sin of pride that keeps them from God
- Are you praying for the salvation of your community?
- Are you praying for the salvation of your homeland?
- Are you burdened to bring the Gospel to your city, your county, your state, your country and internationally?

## Conclusion:

1. Are you a servant of God and others or seeking to be served by God and others?

**Matthew 20:28** even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

2. Are you leading your family to faith in God or faith in ourselves?

3. Are you praying for the salvation of your neighbors and the world?

<http://www.operationworld.org>

<https://www.biblicalministries.org/support/pray/>