

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2023: *God's Mission—My Mission*

Lesson 4 “Sharing God's Mission”

Read for this week's study

Genesis 18; James 5:16; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; Genesis 19:1–29; Genesis 12:1–9.

Memory Text

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34, 35, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Gift of Hospitality
- III. Abraham's Love for Everyone
- IV. Abraham's Spirit of Prayer
- V. Abraham's Mission
- VI. Submission to God's Will
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Genesis 18:1-15. The first verse says that “Yahweh” appeared to Abraham. Who is this “Yahweh”? How does Abraham respond to the three visitors who pass by his tent? What must Lot have learned from Abraham during their time together? What might Abraham's response of hospitality have to do with mission? What tone of voice do you imagine Yahweh used when He said to Sarah, “But you did laugh”? Was Sarah's laugh an expression of doubt? (Sunday's Lesson)
2. Ellen White notes: “Wherever (Abraham) pitched his tent, he set up beside it the altar for sacrifice and worship. When the tent was removed, the altar remained; and many a roving Canaanite, whose knowledge of God had been gained from the life of Abraham His servant, tarried at that altar to offer sacrifice to Jehovah.” *Education*, 187. What would be the modern-day equivalent of Abraham's altar? (Sunday's Lesson)

3. Read Genesis 18:16-33. Why do you think Yahweh engages Abraham before going to Sodom (see verses 17-19)? What actually was the “sin of Sodom”? On what basis did Abraham urge the Lord to spare Sodom (18:23-25)? Abraham lived apart from Sodom to preserve the purity of his family. But at least two times he acted to save Sodom from the consequences of its own actions. How do you maintain a balance between preserving the faith (fortress) and mission (salt)? (Monday’s Lesson)
4. Reflect further on Genesis 18:23-35 compared with James 5:16. The lesson suggests that what Abraham did with the Lord on the way to Sodom is a form of intercessory prayer. What do you think is the function of intercessory prayer in the ultimate scheme of things? How can praying for someone far away or even someone you don’t personally know make any difference? If Jesus’ intercession is not really needed (John 16:25-27), what role can intercessory prayer possibly have within the cosmic conflict? How do you find the balance between persevering in prayer (Abraham, “night and day”) and “vain repetitions” (Matt 23). (Tuesday’s Lesson)
5. Read Genesis 19:1-4. In what ways did Lot behave like Abraham at the beginning of this chapter? Read Genesis 19:18-22. How does this part of the story recall Abraham’s intercession for Sodom? Read Genesis 19:22-24. What do you think gave the angels such a sense of urgency? Was Abraham’s intercession for Sodom a failure (Gen 19:29)? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
6. The lesson suggests that modern-day cities can be especially difficult places to share the gospel. Effective work for the cities today will require much intercessory prayer. How do you relate to the above assertions? (Thursday’s Lesson)
7. A challenge for this week: Find a way to contact someone who is being directly affected by a difficult situation similar to your own. Tell that person you are praying for him or her, and ask God to show you what you can do to help. What experience do you have with approaches like this? (Thursday’s Lesson)
8. “(Abraham’s) allegiance to God was unswerving, while his affability and benevolence inspired confidence and friendship. . . .” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 134. How does one go about maintaining that kind of balance? (Friday’s Lesson)
9. Read Genesis 19:30-36. What does that tell you about the character of Lot and his family? How did they get that way? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

If we all united in prayer, every last one of us, and God emptied heaven of all the angels to work on that character, would that necessarily bring him across? If it could, then how come God lost Lucifer and one third of the angels? They lived in His very presence, and He couldn’t keep them. They were free to leave. And you know He did everything He could to win them back. And Christ led the angels, the loyal angels, in an endless campaign to win the disloyal angels back,

and they could not do it. Nor could Jesus win Judas. Think how Jesus prayed for His disciples, and He could not win Judas.

So sometimes we put God in a very bad light. In fact, it then rolls back on Him the total responsibility for there being any lost. He just didn't work hard enough. And then we are in a sorry situation, or can be. I think the best thing to do is what you've done, to consider the implications of this. And when the implications run so directly counter to the clearest truths of scripture, then they can't be so. Like we're going to come to "spirits in prison" in a while. That will be another example of that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1 & 2 Peter & James, recorded July 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/75MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/76MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: This very important text— John 16:26—that you referred to as perhaps the most misunderstood or ignored text: "I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you." There are so many texts, though, about intercession, and then here's this one that seems clear ***the other way***. We don't need an intercessor. You talked about the principle of understanding in the light of all of the texts. What would you say to that, if I would say, "Look, let's take all of these texts that talk about intercession and understand this one in the light of all these texts."

Graham: Yes. We so often say that if it's a difficult verse, it should be understood in the light of all the clear ones.

Lou: Right.

Graham: Well, what's so interesting about that is that Jesus labeled this verse "plain and clear." He didn't say it was difficult.

Lou: So we really didn't need any other.

Graham: I will accept the Son of God's evaluation as a statement. It is one of the only ones in the whole Bible designated as "plain and clear." And I will understand all the other verses in the Bible in the light of this one. However, one should never leave the others out. We must build a model of understanding based on everything in the Bible. We must be able to put that precious verse in, and all the others, too. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #11 with Lou Venden, "God's Emergency Measures" recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/11MMCAG>

But then, if we trusted God enough, even respected and revered Him enough to take the time to listen, we might hear God provoke the questions Himself. You think about how God stirred His friend Abraham as He was on His way down to Sodom and Gomorrah to consume those cities. He said, “I wouldn’t do this without first telling my friend, Abraham.” Then you remember Abraham’s reply, and how he dared to reason with his God. Look at Genesis 18:23, 25. This is just a part of the whole conversation: “Then Abraham drew near, and said, ‘Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? . . . Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’” (RSV)

Have you ever dared say that to God? Was God offended? No, look at James 2:23, next on the list: “Abraham was called God’s friend.” (GNT) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, “Talking to God as a Friend” recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

Kind words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation which gather over the soul. The true expression of heaven-born sympathy has power to open the door of hearts that need the fragrance of Christlike words, and the simple, delicate touch of the spirit of Christ’s love. {MH 354.4}

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

Righteous words and deeds have a more powerful influence for good than all the sermons that can be preached.—ML 114. {VSS 52.1}

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. {PK 369.3}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will

reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children. {MH 199.4}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. {SC 21.2}

Could your eyes be opened, you would see your heavenly Father bending over you in love; and could you hear His voice it would be in tones of compassion to you who are prostrate with suffering and affliction. Stand fast in His strength; there is rest *for you*. {HP 272.5}

He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. {ML 289.5}

God is to us a tender, compassionate, heavenly Father. {ML 289.6}

The Lord declares by His prophet, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." Jeremiah 31:3. While the sinner is yet far from the Father's house, wasting his substance in a strange country, the Father's heart is yearning over him; and every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father's heart of love. {SC 54.1}

Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. The open heart will be impressed with the love and glory of God as revealed through the works of His hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the glories of the heavens, speak to our hearts, and invite us to become acquainted with Him who made them all. {SC 85.1}

Through creation and redemption, through nature and through Christ, the glories of the divine character are revealed. By the marvelous display of His love in giving "His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," the character of God is revealed to the intelligences of the universe. Through Christ our heavenly Father is made known as the God of love. {ST, December 15, 1914 par. 5}

The souls that turn to Him for refuge, Jesus lifts above the accusing and the strife of tongues. No man or evil angel can impeach these souls. Christ unites them to His own divine-human nature. {DA 568.5}

Taking humanity upon Him, Christ came to be one with humanity, and at the same time to reveal our heavenly Father to sinful human beings. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind. He was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of men; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was a stranger and sojourner on the earth—in the world, but not of the world; tempted and tried as men and women today are tempted and tried, yet living a life free from sin. Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {MH 422.2}

And the same compassion that reached out to rescue Peter is extended to every soul who has fallen under temptation. It is Satan's special device to lead man into sin, and then leave him, helpless and trembling, fearing to seek for pardon. But why should we fear, when God has said, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me?" Isaiah 27:5. Every provision has been made for our infirmities, every encouragement offered us to come to Christ. {COL 156.1}

In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ. {COL 157.3}

The life of Christ was a life charged with a divine message of the love of God, and He longed intensely to impart this love to others in rich measure. Compassion beamed from His countenance, and His conduct was characterized by grace, humility, truth, and love. {FE 179.3}

In the day of affliction, when the enemy presses us, we shall walk among the angels. They will be like a wall of fire about us; and we shall one day walk with them in the city of God. . . . {LHU 341.4}

A guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ. These heavenly watchers shield the righteous from the power of the wicked one. This Satan himself recognized when he said: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?" Job 1:9, 10. . . . The angels appointed to minister to the children of God have at all times access to His presence. {GC 512.2}

Jesus employed no miraculous agency to compel men to believe in him. They were left to choose or reject him, of their own free will. No direct power was to force them into obedience, and destroy the free moral agency that God has given to man. {4Red 86.3}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in copartnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

Today the truths of Scripture are to be brought before the great men of the world in order that they may choose between obedience to God's law and allegiance to the prince of evil. God sets everlasting truth before them—truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not force them to accept it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings. {AA 241.2}

It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which to accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture (*Redemption: or the Miracles of Christ*, pp. 112, 113). {1BC 1120.5}

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. "The truth shall make you free;" and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is "the law of liberty." James 2:12. {DA 466.5}

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit; for he is the source of every right impulse. {OW, December 1, 1909 par. 10}

If the human agent consents, God can and will so identify His will with all our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His Word, that when obeying His will, we are only carrying out the impulses of our minds. {UL 187.5}