

# GENESIS—WEEK 11

## ABRAM ACTS AND GROWS



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is The Creation by Michael van der Borch (~1300 – 1370)  
On display at the Museum Meermanno in The Hague, Netherlands*

Lot ignores some serious red flags in choosing where to settle. His first wake-up call comes in the form of his being carried off into captivity. Abram rides to his rescue—this time.

Then God makes his big promise to Abram—and Abram doubts it!

---

We're pleased to provide *the DEEP* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity in the Lord.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. To subscribe to the daily DEEP email, visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) and click the sign-up button at the bottom.

There, you will also discover many other resources, including many email newsletters, such as our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and *the DEEP*.

We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

Thank you.

Genesis 13:10–15:8 — Abram Acts and Grows  
Copyright 2023 F. Michael Slay  
The Fellowship of Ailbe  
[www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org)

*All scripture references are noted. ESV stands for the English Standard Version. © Copyright 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NKJV stands for the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. NIV stands for The Holy Bible, New International Version®. © Copyright 1973 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved. KJV stands for the King James Version.*

1 Genesis 13:10–18 (ESV)

*And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.*

*The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.*

Lot was smart to look for a place that’s *well watered everywhere*. Every place has plenty of sunshine, air and dirt. Water is what makes the difference. That’s why virtually every city in the world is near a source of water.

But Lot ignored a huge warning sign. *Now the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD*. He moved to a city that had plenty of water, but it was no place to try and raise a family. Lot should have avoided that place like the plague.

As we shall see, this turns into a nightmare—a nightmare that could have been avoided. Lot’s decision to move there was stupid on multiple levels. He ignored some major red flags.

This illustrates an amusing principle about wisdom. The Bible is filled with examples of how spiritual wisdom trumps secular wisdom. Secular wisdom is useful, but to a limited extent.

But note well—secular stupidity matters. There are a few counterexamples, but if something looks really dumb, it probably is really dumb.

Secular wisdom is worthy of limited attention, but always be on guard for secular stupidity.

---

This simplifies how we seek God’s will. Lots of things can be ruled out as obviously wrong or stupid. If God wants you to do something dangerous, He’ll make it very clear, and you would be justified in asking for some pretty strong confirming signs.

So, don’t ignore your intuition about what God wants you to do.

In asking for His guidance, it’s normal to be choosing between alternatives that have already passed the sniff test.

2 Genesis 14:1–12 (ESV)

*In the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, these kings made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). And all these joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea). Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in their hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the border of the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh) and defeated all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hazazon-tamar.*

*Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out, and they joined battle in the Valley of Siddim with Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five. Now the Valley of Siddim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way.*

It's not easy to sort out all the players in this drama, but the long and the short of it is that Lot's neighbors manage to start a war. Having plenty of water doesn't even begin to make up for this.

The kings of *Shinar, Ellasar, Elam, and Goiim* form an alliance. Call them SEEG. *Chedorlaomer king of Elam* seems to be the big cheese, as five other kingdoms are his vassal states (*Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela*). Call them SGAZB. So, after twelve years of paying tribute to Chedorlaomer, the SGAZB kingdoms decide they've had enough and they rebel.

But the SEEG forces march through the Jordan valley like Sherman through Georgia and carry Lot and his household off into captivity.

Let's hope Lot gets a clue from all this.

---

One of the great challenges of discipleship is trying to figure out the meaning of trials and setbacks. Sometimes God is telling us we're on the wrong path, but other times we're supposed to just forge on through. How can you tell the difference?

Well, you don't have much chance if you don't pray. Without prayer, things "just happen" seemingly at random. But in the context of prayer, events take on meaning. Ask and ye shall receive.

And don't be afraid to scream and question. Pain is painful.

Ask the questions you really want the answers to. Anything else is just avoiding the lesson.

3 Genesis 14:13–16 (ESV)

*Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner. These were allies of Abram. When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.*

*Chedorlaomer king of Elam* thinks he's hot stuff, but he hasn't met Lot's uncle. This time it's personal.

Though up against a much larger force, Abram uses a clever military maneuver to rout *Chedorlaomer's* army. This could be where Robert E. Lee got the idea to divide his army at Chancellorsville.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Chancellorsville](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chancellorsville)

In Judges 7:4-7, God chooses a similarly small gang for an important mission.

*And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' shall go with you, and anyone of whom I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' shall not go." So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "Every one who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself. Likewise, every one who kneels down to drink." And the number of those who lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was 300 men, but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. And the LORD said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home." (ESV)*

God winnowed Gideon's fighting force for His glory. Here, the purpose seems the same. From a secular point of view, Abram seems recklessly overconfident, but Abram's confidence is actually justified.

*I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:3 (ESV)*

Abram's bold raid is yet another example of his great faith. He believes God's promise of blessing, so he isn't afraid.

And notice that *Chedorlaomer* apparently isn't killed. Abram doesn't exact justice. That's not his job.

Abram's faith keeps him on track. He pursues *Chedorlaomer* as far as *Hobah* but then quits. He's satisfied with God's blessing and isn't greedy for more.

He doesn't want to play God.

---

Sometimes God's blessings aren't treats but tools—tools for glorifying Him.

4 Genesis 14:17–24 (ESV)

*After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said,*

*“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”*

*And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. And the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.” But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share.”*

Abram has just rescued Lot (plus Lot’s household and a significant percentage of all of Sodom). He’s then greeted by the king of Sodom and the king of Salem (Melchizedek). The contrast between these two kings couldn’t be more stark.

Abram tithes to Melchizedek, indicating complete allegiance and respect. Yet Abram insults the king of Sodom and prohibits any affiliation in the future. Did Abram perceive the coming demise of Sodom, or is there something in what these kings said that justifies this stinging rebuke?

It’s what they said. Melchizedek blesses Abram but gives all the credit to God. He also doesn’t ask for anything; he just proclaims truth.

Contrast this with what the king of Sodom does. He had just lost a war, but then was bailed out by Abram. Maybe groveling wouldn’t be appropriate, but at least some serious thanks are in order.

Furthermore, Melchizedek has just explained what happened and Abram has confirmed his interpretation. This seems to go right over the king of Sodom’s head. So, what does he do? He tries to sound magnanimous and kingly by announcing that Abram can keep his own plunder.

It’s pathetic, and Abram wants nothing to do with this clown.

---

Melchizedek’s words are beautiful. He almost sounds like he’s saying grace. This is a great model for us in two ways: he doesn’t say grace only before eating, and he’s serious.

We can have a “just get it over with” attitude about grace. Are we really all that thankful?

We should strive to model Melchizedek’s heart. Blessings are an important part of the Hebrew culture. Whether saying grace before a meal, or giving thanks in prayer, be serious.

Take time to think about what you’re thankful for.

5 Genesis 15:1–8 (ESV)

*After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

*And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”*

God promises to give Abram a son in his old age and countless descendants. Abram believes him, and this is credited to him as righteousness. This is the key act of faith that made Abram (Abraham) the father of faith. He doesn't argue or ask how. He just believes.

Then God makes another promise—“This land is your land.” Now Abram wants to see proof. *“O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”*

Seriously? What's your problem? Surely, if God can give you children at this age, anything else is a piece of cake. What are you thinking?

He's not thinking; he's feeling. Abram has been hoping and praying for a son and when God says that he's going to grant Abram his heart's desire, it all makes sense. Yet when God tells Abram that this land is his land, he doesn't know what to make of it.

Abram is just being a normal guy. Sure, he's the father of faith, and he can raise an army that can defeat an alliance of kings, but his fears and concerns still drive him.

Abram isn't done growing.

---

As we'll soon see, Abram's request for proof doesn't trigger God's wrath. That's interesting because Abram isn't asking how this will happen; he's questioning God's veracity. That's extreme.

But at least there's nothing phony in what Abram is asking. He's not pretending to be perfect; he's just being Abram, and he's struggling to believe part of God's promise.

There's a great lesson in this. Don't be afraid of your emotions; they're not the essence of what sin is. Anger, doubt, confusion, and almost anything else are okay if that's really how you feel and you need God's help dealing with it. Sincere acknowledgement of weakness takes prayer to the next level.

*Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” — Mark 9:24 (ESV)*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. How can you know that something is definitely stupid?
2. Has a prayer ever helped you make sense out of something?
3. Do you feel obligated to use your blessings for His glory?
4. What are our blessings? (Try to think of something you've never noticed before.)
5. Have you ever prayed about your lack of faith?