

PATH TO PURPOSE

GOD'S EPIC PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Walking the Talk

Text: Genesis 19

Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. Lot made a series of seemingly innocent decisions, but those decisions put him in situations where he was surrounded by ungodly influences. He only escaped some horrendous consequences because of God's amazing grace. Think through the circles that you run in and honestly answer the following questions.
 - a. In what ways are you surrounding yourself with people who are a positive and godly influence?
 - b. In what ways are you putting yourself in situations where people are exerting a negative and ungodly influence in your life?
 - c. Where and how are you being an instrument of positive, godly influence in the life of others? (Not just in wishful thinking, but in reality.)
2. Read Genesis 19:1-29.
 - a. What is your immediate, "gut-level" reaction to some of Lot's actions in this story?
 - b. Why was Lot spared from the destruction of Sodom? (See vv. 16 and 29 for some clues.)
 - c. How do you respond to the fact that God shows grace to this man who has made such a series of foolish choices, including offering his daughters to be taken advantage of by the mob and trying to bargain with God's angels?
 - d. What hope does this offer you?
3. Pastor Ken made the statement, "Friends, if you keep looking back, I can guarantee you'll always be dragged back." What in your life is your Sodom? What keeps tempting you to look back? What would freedom from that look like in your life?
4. Tim Keller says that, broadly speaking, there are three main ways that Christians can relate to the culture at large. On one extreme is isolation, on the other is assimilation, and the ideal is infiltration.
 - a. Describe each one in your own words.
 - b. What are clues for determining which category one is falling into?
 - c. What must one do if he/she finds themselves isolating or assimilating?

- d. Which of the three do you find yourself most often fitting into?
- e. How can you take steps forward towards infiltrating culture by moving towards the world and exercising godly influence?

Challenge: Pastor Ken mentioned 3 signs that we can recognize we are sliding or inching back towards Sodom. 1. Lack of prayer 2. Lack of community. 3. Lack of influence.

Which of these signs do you see evidence of in your life? What can you do to change that? Who can hold you accountable?

Prayer: God, we come to you in desperate need of grace just like Lot. We confess we find ourselves tempted by the world around us. We confess we find ourselves looking back, not obeying and moving forward. We confess that we can see signs in our life where we slide or inch backwards. We pray God and ask that you continue to surround us with Godly influence and relationships as they are vital to our obedience and walk with you. If we have been neglectful in our relationship with you or have failed to pray, God put us back on track. We want to be a person of Godly influence in our world, our culture, our friends, our family, and our work places. We rely on you Lord. Thank you for the grace and love that you show us that you never turn your back on us. We love you Lord. Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

When Jesus told His followers they were to make disciples—that is, followers—of all nations, He was not speaking to a select group of special Christians. He was speaking to all of us.

Every Christian has a mandate to lead and make an impact on the world around them. This leadership calling is not confined to a certain position, career or even a day of the week; it's something we choose to walk out in our everyday lives. While every believer is called to lead, 97 percent of us will not do that standing behind a pulpit or ministering within the walls of the church.

The vast majority of the body of Christ will be learning to use their influence in the marketplace, workplace, home, and in their community. This is good news. We need Christians who have embraced the mandate to lead and are leaning into God's purposes for a lost and broken culture.

Salt in Soil.

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells us that we are the salt of the earth. That word "earth" does not mean nations, but soil—the environment in which things can grow and be cultivated. In agriculture, salt in soil acts both as a fertilizer and as a weed-killer. Soil with a high salt content kills certain plants, while allowing other plants to flourish.

Soil is a metaphor for people's lives and for the culture people create, which in turn shapes them and the world. If we are truly the "salt" Jesus commands us to be, then our lives will influence what grows, and

what is kept from growing, in the people and culture around us. In fact, Jesus' statement that we are the salt of the earth means we are responsible for people and culture.

When we see things growing in people and culture that shouldn't be there, or see a lack of things that should be growing, we should think, "This soil needs more Christ-like influence. More 'salt'."

Follow the Leader.

Jesus soberly adds that if salt loses its purpose, it is good for nothing. We have to be the real deal. Our lives actually have to be permeated with the distinctive flavor of Christ and His kingdom if we are going to fulfill our mandate to lead and benefit others through our influence.

Paul gave us the key to being the real deal when he said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1 NIV). Jesus was the most profound leader ever to walk the earth. His example is the one we must follow and seek to show to those around us.

Jesus was both effective and impactful—two important measurements of successful leadership. He was effective in the sense that He didn't merely gain an audience or preach a message; He made true disciples and imparted His Spirit, values, character, and behavior in them. He was impactful, because in reproducing Himself in His disciples, they were so transformed that they in turn began to influence others in the same way He had influenced them.

Jesus told His disciples, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). To be effective and have impact as leaders in the world, we must enter fully into this rhythm of receiving our distinct understanding and influence from Jesus, and then passing it along to others.

Love Well.

Jesus didn't just tell us He loved us; He demonstrated that love to us in a way that forever defined what true love is. The greatest love in the universe is the passionate, sacrificial love of the Father for His sons and daughters. Jesus showed us the Father's heart to restore His lost and broken family, and this is the heart we must receive and share with the world.

1 John 4:18 says that perfect love casts out fear. The most obvious sign that we are demonstrating the love of the Father effectively is that we are helping to lower people's fear and anxiety. We don't have to be geniuses to figure out how to do this; we just have to be courageous and consistent in doing the things that make people feel safe and cared for. For example, people are scared when they feel manipulated or controlled, when they feel uncertain, or when they feel unheard and unknown.

In contrast, people feel safe, cared for, valued, and invited to show up when we offer them freedom, communicate clearly and honestly, and take the time to listen and get to know them. When people tangibly experience care and safety through us, we show them the Father.

Serve Extravagantly.

Serving is the number-one expression of love—and of leadership. Jesus continually taught His disciples that serving defined greatness in the kingdom, and His final lesson on leadership was a demonstration of serving, when He put a towel around His waist and washed His disciples' feet.

Serving is choosing to prefer others over ourselves by using the resources of our lives for their benefit. This is exactly what Jesus modeled—He “did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:6-7 NIV).

There's really nothing that will make us taste more “salty” to the world than taking the things we could use to our advantage and using them to serve others. In a culture that worships the self and self-serving, it is truly counter-cultural to “value others above ourselves” (Philippians 2:3 NIV) and come alongside them to champion their dreams, offer encouragement, and sacrificially meet their needs.

Do Everything With Excellence.

One of the best descriptions of excellence in the Bible is Paul's: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize” (1 Corinthians 9:24). Jesus modeled a lifestyle pointed at the prize: glorifying His Father by rescuing and restoring us to Him. This was what drove Him to pay the unimaginable price required to defeat sin, death, and hell. The excellence of His character—the greatest example of courage and heroism in history—was displayed because Jesus' aligned every detail of His life with this prize.

Every one of us is surrounded by people who are starving for purpose and meaning in life. They long to believe that they could be in a story where they matter, and where a good future might be attainable for them.

They long to be transformed into the best version of themselves. Yet every prize the world offers leaves them hungrier and more hopeless.

It is up to us—those who have discovered that we are heaven's prize, and have made God our prize in return—to show the world that what they long for is possible.

When we refuse to give God anything less than our best—especially in the moments that seem meaningless or difficult—we become beacons of hope for people.

<https://relevantmagazine.com/article/how-to-actually-have-influence-at-your-job/>