

Genesis/Faith's Solution to Strife/13:1-18

MAIN POINT

When we put our faith in God's promises it allows us to act unselfishly, generously, and mercifully in resolving strife.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What is the most generous thing you have ever received?

Following God's plan for our lives is always the right thing to do, but it's not always the easiest. The mission He has given our church—to reach the world with the gospel—is a massive undertaking that is filled with blessings and conflict, and both grow our faith and trust in God as we follow the Lord's leading in our lives. Abram was called to obedience and so are we. Abram experienced conflict amidst God's promises and so will we. Today's discussion will help us see the impact our faith should have on our relationships with others and how we handle conflict.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What insight, lesson, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
- 2. When you face conflict as you're trying to live for God, what impact does it tend to have on your faith and your level of obedience?**

As we walk through life, conflict is going to come. We need to think about how we handle conflict in our lives. Do we give way to bickering and acting in a sinful way? Or, do we trust the Lord and seek to conduct ourselves in a Spirit-led way? We are not going to respond to conflict perfectly every time, but it is our goal. Many times we make a current conflict even worse by our words and behavior during the conflict.

- 3. Look at Abram's solution to the conflict. What does his choice of less fertile land reveal about him? What principles can we learn from his behavior in this passage?**

Abram wanted resolution to the conflict raging between members of his family and his shepherds. He desired peace more than anything. He gave Lot the right to choose the exact land he wanted to take and settle his family. Abram would go elsewhere and settle his own family. Abram's response is in complete contrast to his experience in Egypt. Abram had all the right in the world to have first choice, he was the older man, leader of the faith expedition, but he deferred to his nephew and ultimately towards God. "Confident and unthreatened, he was selfless and generous".

Finally, by faith he counted on God's promises to make the land Lot rejected suitable and productive for all his needs and he trusted that God would give him the promised land in the end. Abram trusted the Lord and humbled himself to resolve conflict.

4. **Read Genesis 13:13 again. What does Lot's taking the well-watered land say about the condition of his heart and his attitude toward his uncle Abram? How does Lot's choice to live near Sodom match the sort of person he seems to be based on his behavior?**

Lot was walking by sight and not by faith. Lot's choice came from his desires, from the lust of the eyes, what he felt, and what he wanted without any consideration about how this would affect him. He made the same mistake Abram did in Egypt, he didn't stop to pray or ask God which path he should take. He didn't think about how this would affect his relationship with Abram and affect his own family. Lot was sucked into the beauty and prosperity of Sodom.

Like Lot we sometimes make selfish choices we think will bless us but they end up harming us. We also fall prey to temptation and place ourselves in sinful situations. We enter the company of sinful people, not to evangelize them but to join them. We cannot be what God wants when we immerse ourselves in evil (1 Cor. 15:33). Obedience involves avoiding evil situations and following God. By choosing to mature in our faith through seeking consistent fellowship with God, we can experience the blessings of abundant life.

5. **Look at verses 14-17. In light of Abram's faith, what did God promise him? What does this teach us about our relationship with God?**

God reaffirms the promise for the land and shows Abram the places. God reaffirms his descendants that will live in this land and that they will be innumerable.

God blessed Abram for this decision. After separating from Lot, God made amazing, universal promises to Abram, giving him hope for the rest of his journey. Like we discussed on Sunday, "generous actions of the faithful receive approval from God. God loves it when we believe His word and model the image of His son by being selfless, generous, and merciful.

6. Why does God care about how we, as His children, handle conflict? What example has He set for us through Christ?

Conflict is a guarantee in this life. Because it is guaranteed, we need to ponder and pray about how we will handle conflict in our lives. We can either be sinful or Spirit-led with our responses to conflict. God uses these situations to build character and perseverance. He is equipping us for the journey ahead each and every day.

We discussed on Sunday how Abram was modeling the example of Christ from Philippians 2:4-8

Philippians 2:1-8 (NIV)

Imitating Christ's Humility

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature^[a] God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death- even death on a cross!

7. On the other hand, what does a godly response to conflict look like? Can you share a personal example?

We can find many examples of a Godly response to conflict all through scripture. Some examples from scripture are below.

Matthew 18:15-17

New International Version

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister^[a] sins,^[b] go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'^[c] ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

James 1:19-20
New International Version

Listening and Doing

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Colossians 3:12-14
New International Version

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

There are probably a few good examples from people in the group and encourage everyone to share if they have a story. We have a tendency to remember examples of people in our life who have resolved conflict well.

8. What is your normal response to conflict? How might we as a group help each other pursue the faith and humility modeled by Abram?

All of our natural responses without the Holy Spirit working inside of us will be like Lot's response. It will be motivated by our selfish desires to do only what makes us feel good and what we want. For those of us with the Holy Spirit living and working inside of us there will be those moments where we are listening to the Holy Spirit's leading and will remember God's promises and will be able to respond like Abram but there will also be those times where we forget and start to behave like Lot.

As Christians, we can encourage each other to model the faith and humility like Abram and we have scripture that reminds us of that:

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11
New International Version

⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Proverbs 27:17

New International Version

¹⁷ As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.

Conclusion

So now we see the faith's solution to strife. Abram gave us a great example of a better way to resolve potential conflict and in so doing show us what it is like to walk by faith in strife. Abram made a choice and trusted in the promises of God which allowed him to act unselfishly, generously, and mercifully towards Lot. He knew he did not need to try and grasp and jealously guard what he thought was his. He knew God was the one with the power to give it to him and it was only through God that he would even be able to possess it.

PRAYER

Thank God for graciously saving us and giving us new hearts. Pray that we would learn to live by, rely on, and demonstrate His grace. Pray that our church would be marked by people who humble themselves before God and resolve conflict in a loving and gracious manner.



FURTHER STUDY



Philippians 4:11-13

New International Version

¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Matthew 6:19-21

New International Version

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹ “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc, is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.

- **C. S. Lewis**

When you see no present advantage, walk by faith and not by sight. Do God the honor to trust Him when it comes to matters of loss for the sake of principle.

- **Charles Spurgeon**

Additional Resources

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/once-divided/>

Articles –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/are-you-all-in-on-the-promises-of-god/>

Sermon-

<https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/radical-generosity-2/>

<https://www.tvresources.net/resource-library/sermons/arrogance-humility/>

