



## World Christian Fellowship

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### What to when it is over?

**Genesis 13:1-18**, *Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. <sup>2</sup>Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. <sup>3</sup>And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, <sup>4</sup>to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.*

*<sup>5</sup>Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. <sup>6</sup>Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. <sup>7</sup>And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.*

*<sup>8</sup>So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. <sup>9</sup>Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."*

*<sup>10</sup>And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. <sup>11</sup>Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. <sup>12</sup>Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. <sup>13</sup>But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.*

*<sup>14</sup>And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; <sup>15</sup>for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. <sup>16</sup>And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. <sup>17</sup>Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.”*

*<sup>18</sup>Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.*

Last week we saw about the relationship breakup or make up!

Offense is inevitable

Forgiveness is mandatory.

Reconciliation is optional.

We notice God's response to how Abraham handles this conflict: God reaffirms His covenant promises. Genesis 13:14–17.

This is essentially God saying, "Abraham you have done well, and I will surely bless you."

- It is the same thing God said to Abraham after he left Haran and came to Canaan in **Genesis 12**.
- It's the same thing God said after Abraham won the battle with the raiding armies in **Genesis 15**.
- It's the same thing God said to Abraham before he offered his son as a sacrifice in **Genesis 22**.

Responding properly to conflict brought God's blessing and affirmation in Abraham's life.

Similarly, how we respond to conflict will affect God's blessing upon our lives.

In this narrative, we see principles for responding in faith to difficult relationships.

We should be aware that these difficult relationships will often be with people close to us: a wife, a husband, a brother, a sister, or a member of the church.

Just as Abraham's conflict was with his nephew, Lot. Those who faithfully respond to conflict will receive God's blessing on their lives.

## **1. Seek Communion with God**

**Genesis 13:1–4, 18.**

**What is the significance of Abraham's altars mentioned in Genesis 13:4 and 18?**

Abraham's altars should not go unnoticed in the story. In the previous narrative, we saw Abraham go down to Egypt (**Genesis 12:10–20**).

He decided to not trust in God when he encountered a famine in Canaan. He took things into his own hands. He built no altars to worship and seek the Lord, and consequently, almost lost his wife.

In contrast, this narrative is enclosed by altars. After leaving Egypt, Abraham essentially repents of his sin as he returns to the first altar he built in Canaan.

Soon after he works out the discord with Lot, he then builds another altar to God in Hebron. The word "**Hebron**" means communion.

If we are going to have a faith-filled response to discord, then, we must live in worship and we must live in constant communion with God.

In chapter 12, Abraham does not respond in faith when he encounters the famine. He heads to Egypt. But, while in Egypt, his faith is strengthened. He learns that even while he is unfaithful to God, God is faithful to him.

God miraculously protects his wife when she is taken by Pharaoh for marriage.

In thankfulness and trust to God, Abraham worships at the altar he originally made.

Soon after resolving the conflict with Lot, he builds another altar and worships God.

This is what enabled Abraham to walk in faith when discord and conflict struck his family.

How can we properly respond to conflict in our lives conflict with friends, family, co-workers, and church members?

We must be people who live in communion with God.

We must be a community of worship not just on Sundays but every day.

Right after Adam and Eve sinned, Adam by implication blamed God and then the woman. The woman blamed the serpent. Discord was a result of sin. Therefore, many people know nothing of a day without some type of discord with others. It has been part of our human nature since the fall.

**How was Abraham able to respond in faith when encountering conflict?**

Abraham responded in faith because he was living in the Spirit. He was living in communion with God. He worshiped before the altercation and after it. He was abiding in God, and therefore, the fruit of the Spirit grew in his life.

**Are you a worshiper?**

**Are you living in the Word and prayer?**

You can tell by your response to those who upset or fail you.

We must walk in the path of our father Abraham. Let us worship before the trial and after the trial, for only there will we find the fruit of the Spirit, which brings peace.

How is God calling you to live more in his presence?

## 2. Consider Our Witness to Unbelievers

**Genesis 13:5–8,**

**What is the significance of the “Canaanites and the Perizzites” who were in the land?**

Abraham had just returned from Egypt with his nephew Lot, and they had become very wealthy people.

Pharaoh gave Abraham great wealth for the sake of Sarah, and obviously, much of it was shared with Lot.

They had flocks, herds, tents, and herdsmen. Therefore, they weren't able to stay together. Moses, the narrator, said that the land could not support them (V 6).

Obviously, Moses is not saying that the land wasn't big enough, he is probably referring to the amount of food available during the famine. If Abraham's and Lot's camps stayed together, it would be hard to find enough food.

In addition, Moses chooses to add another bit of information after describing Abraham and Lot's conflict.

**Genesis 13:7–8,** *The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, “Let's not have any quarrelling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers.*

There were Canaanites and Perizzites living in the land. Therefore, it wasn't just because of the conflict with Lot's herdsmen that Abraham approached Lot or because of the scarce resources. It was also because of the Canaanites and Perizzites who lived in the land.

This could mean one of two things.

- It could mean that Canaan is so saturated with the four camps of people (Abraham's, Lot's, the Canaanites, and Perizzites) that there was great competition for food.
- Or it could mean that Abraham approached Lot to fix the problem, in part, because of their witness to the Canaanites and Perizzites.

We must remember that God's plan for Abraham wasn't just to make his name great and make him a great nation. God was going to do those things primarily so that "*all the nations of the world would be blessed through him*" (**Genesis 12:3**).

Abraham was called to be a witness of God to the pagans, and one day the Messiah would come through his lineage.

When he first got to the land, he built an altar right next to the "*great tree of Moreh*" (**Genesis 12:6**).

This was probably a pagan shrine where the Canaanites worshiped. "Moreh" actually means "teaching."

Trees were symbols of fertility, so the Canaanites placed shrines in them and used them for worship. This particular tree was probably a place where the Canaanite prophets taught the people.

However, Abraham places his altar to the God of heaven and earth right next to their shrine. He was a bold witness who desired for the pagans to know the true God.

At this time, Abraham was one of the only people in Canaan who still worshiped Yahweh God. At the Tower of Babel in **Genesis 11**, we see that most of the world was already rebelling against God after the flood. They also had become increasingly polytheistic, worshiping many gods.

When Abraham came to town, he started building altars to the only God, as a witness to the pagans in the land.

One of the reasons that Abraham seeks to fix this situation with his nephew is probably because of his witness. This was perhaps even more pressing on Abraham's heart after he had failed before Pharaoh and the entire nation of Egypt. When he lied about his wife and Pharaoh confronted him, Abraham had nothing to say. He had lost his witness.

When Abraham returned to Canaan and built the first altar, his initial worship was probably repentance (Genesis 13:1–4).

No doubt, he repented for not trusting God and because of his bad witness to the Egyptians.

Now, he is motivated to honour God with his witness in the land.

Division between him and Lot would only further push the pagans away from God. The Canaanites would say, "They are just like us." And, it would give them no reason to believe in and follow God.

This is an important concept for us to understand. It should help keep families, marriages, friendships, and even churches together.

How we interact with each other will either promote our God or it will disgrace his name. We see this taught throughout Scripture.

**John 17:23**, *"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

Believers will love one another and walk in unity, even when things are difficult, because it affects evangelism. It affects people believing that God sent Jesus into the world.

The world is always looking at how we relate to one another, and they value Christ not just on how we live individually, but how we live corporately.

**John 13:35**, *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Our relationships say something about Christ, and they also say something about us.

When we visit the unsaved relatives and friends of church members, seeking to interest them in spiritual things, only to discover that they knew about every "church fight" in town.

**Mahatma Gandhi** said, *"I like your Christ. I don't like your Christians. They are so unlike your Christ."*

Nonbelievers are always watching and looking for a reason to mock Christians and their Christ.

Therefore, when there is a scandal, it is always highly publicized in the news and on the Internet. Our unity is important for evangelism. Therefore, this should encourage us to seek reconciliation.

How do we learn to respond in faith to discord?

One way is by remembering the importance of our witness to unbelievers. Our unity affects evangelism

- Weak faith only considers my pride, my wants, what I think is right, or how bad I was treated.
- But strong faith thinks about the gospel, other people's faith, and ultimately, the glory of Christ.

How do you respond when there is conflict?

### **3. Focus on Commonality in Christ.**

**Genesis 13:8**, *"Let's not have any quarrelling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers."*

He essentially approached Lot and said, "Let's not fight because we are brothers, we are family."

Abraham sought unity based on their commonality.

Because they were family, he essentially said that being in discord was not an option.

However, when there is discord, typically, people choose to focus on their differences rather than their commonalities.

We often make comments like, “We just don’t think alike,” “We are from different cultures,” and “We don’t understand one another,” instead of focusing on what is shared.

Abraham didn’t say, “We have these differences, so let’s split.” He said, “We have got this in common, let us figure this out in an amicable way.”

That is a fundamental difference from the way most handle their conflicts.

**Philippians 2:1–2**, *Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, <sup>2</sup>fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

We have become one in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Ephesians 4:3**, *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Essentially, Paul says because the Spirit made us one, we must make every effort to live it.

**Ephesians 4:26**, *“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,*

We must quickly seek restoration.

This is a principle that has been lost in our Christian friendships, marriages, and churches. We are one and, therefore, living in discord is not an option.

#### **4. Humbly put the Interests of Others' First**

**Genesis 13:8–9**, *<sup>8</sup>So Abram said to Lot, “Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. <sup>9</sup>Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.”*

**Why does Abraham offer Lot the first choice of the land, even though God promised it to him?**

We should notice another aspect of Abraham’s response. He humbled himself by giving Lot the pick of the land.

In the Jewish culture, Abraham was the patriarch—the oldest male and, therefore, the chief. Lot was his nephew, the son of Abraham’s brother. In that culture, Lot had to submit to Abraham.

However, Abraham did something uncommon in that culture by giving up his rights and humbling himself before his younger relative.

But not only did Abraham have a cultural right to the best of the land, but he also had a divine right.

God promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan. However, Abraham still offers the best of the land to Lot. This not only shows Abraham's humility, but also his faith.

If we are going to respond in faith to conflict, we must learn how to humble ourselves in faith and seek the interests of others before our own.

Most conflict and division are a result of our pride. We fight because we don't want to give in or relinquish what we think is our right.

However, faith doesn't respond that way. Faith sees any right we have as coming from God, and therefore, God will defend those rights if it is truly his will.

**Philippians 2:3–5**, *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. <sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

Christ gave up his rights as a member of the Godhead and took the form of a servant on earth, serving others even unto death.

**How do we implement this practically?**

We do the same thing that Abraham did, as he sought to resolve this conflict.

Abraham humbled himself and gave up his rights.

He gave up his right as the patriarch and as the one God promised the land to, in order to mend his relationship with his nephew.

**Matthew 5:38–40**, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*

Jesus said that one of the characteristics of the people in His kingdom would be their willingness to humble themselves and give up their rights.

Instead of demanding their rights, they would rather turn the other cheek and not only give away their shirt but their jacket as well.

## **5. Pursue God and His Blessing**

Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, toward Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

So, Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east.

The two men parted company.

Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.

### **Genesis 13:10–18**

Lot took Abraham up on his offer. He looked around at the land, but instead of focusing on Canaan, the land of promise, he looked at the area of Sodom and Gomorrah. He saw that it was well-watered like Egypt, and he decided to go there instead of staying in the land of Canaan.

Lot chose to pitch his tent near Sodom at the edge of the promised land. He first lives outside of Sodom, even though it

was a wicked city, but then he moves into the land in chapter 14.

Then, in chapter 19, he is not only living in Sodom but has prospered there. We see him at the “gateway of the city” when the angels enter the land to save him (19:1). This probably means that he became an elder in the city.

Finally, we see that all the riches and prestige he gained was lost when God destroyed Sodom.

He also lost his family because Sodom was in their hearts.

His wife looked back to Sodom, as it was being destroyed, and she was turned into a pillar of salt.

His daughters raped him to have children.

Lot’s children were the founders of the Moabites and Ammonites, who throughout Old Testament history were enemies of God. Lot’s decision to choose the world over the things of God cost him everything.

Lot was a righteous man, but he made his decision based on the prosperity of this world.

He didn’t choose the prosperity of Sodom over God.

Lot thought he could have the prosperity of Sodom and still have the blessing of God. He wanted both.

Sadly, this is true for many Christians.

They want to follow God, but they also want the esteem and prosperity of the world.

However, this desire for the things of the world often destroys them as well.

For many Christians, like Lot, their primary focus in life is the world's prosperity instead of God and his blessing.

A person gets offered more money at a company, and they give no thought to the spiritual condition of the company.

They don't ask themselves, "Where can I be more faithful to God?" or "How can I be most profitable for the kingdom?"

Many Christians makes their decisions solely based on money and prosperity. Therefore, often find themselves in dry seasons, as they leave their church home, their former ministry, and accountability partners.

Lot, though a righteous man, only cared about secular success and not spiritual blessing, and it destroyed him and his family.

**1 Timothy 6:10**, *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*

However, Abraham wanted the blessing of God and not that of the world. This is why he could offer Lot the best of the land.

In the same way, we must desire the blessing of God over prosperity, if we are going to respond to conflicts with faith.

No surprise that we see God pronounce a blessing upon Abraham right after this discourse.

After Lot lifted his eyes and decided on the prosperity of Sodom, God tells Abraham to lift his eyes because the land would be given to him and his descendants.

His descendants would be like the sand on the seashore.

Again, God revealed himself and blessed Abraham for his faithful response to Lot. This is the same thing God did after Abraham left Haran in chapter 12 and again in chapter 15 after Abraham heroically defeated a raiding army. Finally, God blesses him again in chapter 22 after Abraham offers his son to God.

God was pleased with how Abraham handled the conflict, and therefore, he blessed him and renewed his covenant with him.