

Bible Studies for Life: October 31

Confidence in the Midst of Conflict • Genesis 13:5-11, 14-18

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Suppose we could survey Mississippi lawyers who practice family law and ask about their experiences with probates and inheritances. I'm sure they would have remarkable stories of how families worked together, but I'm also sure they have seen family relationships torn apart. Why? The top reason is love of money.

However, the more significant question is: Would those attorneys be able to say they saw a remarkable difference between those who call themselves Believers and those who aren't Christians? Do they see Believers step forward with a willingness to resolve conflicts in a way that reflects Christ?

"We don't all respond to conflict the same way. Many people avoid conflict at all costs. Others seek to win every conflict at any cost. While there are times when we must stand our ground, often conflicts are about issues of personal desires. God calls us to place the needs of others before our own. Doing this can sometimes call for personal sacrifice, but even then, we can trust that God will provide what we need to live our lives in obedience to Him" (LifeWay).

Conflict happens even in the best relationships (Genesis 13:5-8 ESV). Last week's lesson left us with Abraham and his family returning to where they had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai. Abraham and his nephew Lot were wealthy with flocks, herds, and jewels. These possessions were of more value than owning land.

Because of their great numbers of herds, strife arose between the herdsmen. Why? Because there wasn't enough land to provide for the animals. What was the solution? Abraham steps forward with a willingness to resolve the issue. He could have pulled rank or seniority. Instead, we see he graciously gives Lot the first choice.

Abraham reminds Lot that they are kinsmen. This term refers to "a blood relative based on Israel's tribal nature" (Holman Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1991). There were additional obligations, such as the blood avenger or redeeming the estate of the nearest relative.

Place others' needs before your own (Genesis 13:9-11). Notice that Abraham steps forward to be the peacemaker and willingly gives a choice to Lot. Whatever Lot chose, Abraham would accept his decision and go in the opposite direction.

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" (v. 10a). If everything he saw was like the garden of the Lord, we know it was a fertile, beautiful place.

Perhaps Lot's decision shows his immaturity, but it really shows the condition of his heart. Why didn't he turn to Abraham, thank him for the opportunity, and ask him to make the choice? The answer is selfishness and eyes trained on the world. Later, we will see how Lot moved closer to Sodom (and don't overlook the word 'all' in v. 11).

Also, remember the herdsmen were watching and listening. Would

they see how Abraham, yielding his rights, exemplified the principle of Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others."

Trust God to remain faithful to keep His promises (Genesis 13:14-18). In this passage, we read Lot has departed. Then "The LORD said to Abraham, lift up your eyes... look northward, southward, eastward, and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever" (v. 14-15).

Take note of two things: Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the Jordan Valley. He could only see in one direction. Abraham was told to lift up his eyes and look everywhere; he was making a complete circle and the land which God would give to him included the land Lot had chosen for himself.

By relinquishing his rights, Abraham was allowing God to choose for him. Lot had an attitude of, "I will take, and things are impossible." Abraham's attitude was "I will give, and I'm trusting God for the possible."

"It is your faith in God that determines how much of His blessing you will enjoy" (Warren Wiersbe, Be Obedient, Genesis 12-25). Our confidence in the middle of conflict rests on God's promises and His abilities. It's a matter of faith!

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