

Conflict Resolution 1-28-07

Genesis 13:1-18 (NIV)

¹ So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. ³ From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴ and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. ⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." ¹⁰ 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.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: ¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. ¹³ Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷ Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you." ¹⁸ So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.

Abram had gone through the land God had promised him, worshipping and proclaiming the name of YHWH as he went. Then a famine forced him down into Egypt for the survival of his flocks. In Egypt, Abram yielded to fear and called his wife, Sarai, his sister. Pharaoh took her to his palace to add her to his harem. The Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his wives, through which he discovered Sarai was really Abram's wife. His fear of God kept him from taking Abram's life. Instead he sent them back to the Negev with Sarai and all the possessions they had gained in Egypt. This is certainly a blot on Abram's faith walk, but also a lesson to trust the Lord and believe His promises instead of his own cunning. Hopefully, we have learned from it too.

¹ So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ² Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. This story begins with a word in common at the beginning of the last story. The description of the famine, and the description of Abram's wealth are the same word in Hebrew, kabad (kaw-bade') or heavy. The famine was heavy. Abram's wealth was

heavy. The author uses the same word to contrast the two stories, the physical conditions, and the spiritual condition of Abram.

In spite of Abram's failure to trust God for his safety, he left Egypt with increased wealth, some of which may have come from wedding gifts when Pharaoh took Sarai. Remember, material blessing is not always a sign of obedience, just as poverty is not a sign of punishment. (Philippians 4:12) The famine struck as Abram walked in obedience. He prospered financially when he was ungodly. ⁷ *The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts.* 1 Samuel 2:7 (NIV) His actions are always in line with His character. Though we may not understand His hand, we can trust His heart. (Lamentations 3:22,23)

There are those today in the Christian world that believe that every believer should be prosperous materially. My simple answer is then why wasn't Jesus, who is our perfect example, materially wealthy? He didn't have a home, depended on the generosity of others, and left only the clothes on his back. (Matthew 8:20) God can use wealth in your life, or He can use poverty. He sent the famine, and He made Abram rich. It is not our material or even physical condition that is so important as our spiritual condition. It is what God is working into our lives through our material condition that really matters. (John 6:63)

We need to see that God has us in our physical state for our instruction and eternal good. The Jewish people for centuries and some to this day have prayed prayers of gratitude for every good thing. The Scriptures exhort us to bless (extol) the Lord. (Psalm 34:1) So when they wake up they pray, "Blessed art Thou O Lord King of the Universe that preserved my life through the night. Blessed art Thou O Lord who causes the sun to shine, warming the earth. Blessed art Thou O Lord who gives us clothes to cover our bodies" and so on. What a positive attitude we would have if we went through the day blessing God for all the goodness that we so often take for granted. Instead of complaining about the few things that aren't just like we would like them, we would be blessing God for His abundant goodness. (Psalm 103:1,2)

³ *From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier⁴ and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.* Abram went back to the place where he had built an altar previously. It was a sacred place to him because of his encounter with the LORD. Do you have sacred places? Where have you encountered the LORD? Certainly this sanctuary should be one. The place I pray in the morning is one. Actually, where I exercise has become one such place, because I listen to praise music there and often end up in the presence of the LORD.

When you return to those sacred places, you remember past encounters. You relive what the LORD spoke to your heart, and you remember your conviction to follow the LORD in a specific area of your life. Returning to your altars on a regular basis can help to keep us on track.

Abram's grandson, Jacob, will have an encounter with God near the same place and he will return at the direction of the LORD and remember his commitment to God.

Commented [notes1]: 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. Phil 4:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lam 3:22-23 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Matt 8:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. John 6:63 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. Psalms 34:1 (KJV)

Commented [notes6]: 1 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Psalms 103:1-2 (KJV)

(Genesis 35:1) Now that Abram had returned, he again begins to proclaim the name of the LORD. His confidence may have faltered in Egypt, but God hasn't given up on him nor has he given up on a relationship with God. (Joshua 1:9)

⁵ Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. The needs of their flock required them to camp at a distance from each other, but still, they did not have enough pastureland. If you have ever lived through the death of a loved one that had any wealth, you know how possessions can divide. Greed is such an accepted vice in our culture that it is rare to find an inheritance settlement without at least threats of litigation. Wealth has torn apart so many families. (Colossians 3:5) Contention seems to follow wherever there is wealth. That is because of the greed in men's hearts. We have a tendency to think our life consists of our possessions. (Luke 12:15) As the bumper sticker reads, "He who dies with the most toys wins." You would think we would have gotten past that idea when we found King Tut's tomb, but the idea is still alive and well in the hearts of men. Are there any among us that can say we are totally free from the allure of wealth and possessions? (Psalm 119:36)

⁷ And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. Now we come to the crux of the chapter, the conflict between Abram and Lot. You can just imagine the shepherd's of each party trying to beat the other to pasture. Added to that is the contention with the locals who had been there before them and you have constant conflict over the available pastureland. We sometimes have the same problem in the church when two people in the same type of business attend the same church. I've heard it several times. "I won't go there because so and so attends there," (a person in the same line of business). How sad to make a decision on where you worship based on competition for business or dislike of a competitor.

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Abram is the more mature of the two and so he is the one that moves first toward resolution. It is usually that way. In most conflicts, both parties are offended and feel slighted. Usually both feel they are in the right, and so in many cases both think the other should make the first move toward resolution. But it is usually the more spiritually mature person that will make the first move. They are the ones bothered in their spirit over the lack of peace. (Matthew 18:15)

Abram suggests, "Let's not quarrel, us or our herdsmen." He gives a great reason not to quarrel. "We are brothers." Christian brothers and sisters have an even greater reason to resolve conflict. They are children of God. Someone might say, "Aha! A loophole. If someone is not my brother I can hold a grudge and refuse to resolve our differences!" Sorry, but Jesus closed that loophole with the story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10:36,37) Everyone we meet is our brother. We all descended from Noah.

Commented [notes7]: 1 Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau."
Gen 35:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."
Josh 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.
Col 3:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 15 Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
Luke 12:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 36 Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.
Psalms 119:36 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."
Matt 18:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."
Luke 10:36-37 (NIV)

Abram was becoming a godly man. He moved to resolve the difference. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promised that the peacemakers would be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9) Do you want God to bless you and call you a son? Then you be the first to settle the difference. Abram went beyond just taking the first step; he was willing to let Lot win. The difference had been over the best pasture. Watch what Abram does.

⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left." You know good and well that Lot is going to take what they have been arguing over, the best of the pasture. Abram was willing to let him win. Are relationships important enough for you to let the other party win? Do you desire peace so much that you are willing to pay whatever price the other side might extract? The Apostle Paul tells us that we should be willing to be wronged or even cheated rather than to go to court against a brother. (2Corinthians 6:7) But even more than the motivation of relationship, I believe Abram is becoming a man of faith. He knows God has promised him the land. So what does it matter what Lot picks. Abram believes it is all his, so he can let Lot have whatever he wants for the time being. Eventually Lot did move out of the Promised Land.

Generosity flows out of the realization that the blessing of God makes you spiritually rich. (Ephesians 1:3) It comes from realizing He favors you, loves you, and watches over you. What did Jesus do when He realized that everything was given into His hands? He washed his disciples stinky dirty feet. (John 13:3-5) You see, when you know you have so much, you can give out of your abundance and not be afraid of being in need. Abram knew it was all his. He could loan any of it out to Lot without fear of being in need. (Psalm 23:1)

As Christians, we often live as if our Father didn't own the cattle on a thousand hills. (Psalm 50:10) We think like Nebuchadnezzar who said, *"Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"* Daniel 4:30 (NIV) "Look what a clever businessman I am!" We don't realize that it is God who give the ability to produce wealth. (Deuteronomy 8:18) Though we are heirs of the King of kings, we act as if we are paupers physically and spiritually. (1Corinthians 3:21) If you are in Christ Jesus you have all you need. He supplies your daily bread, the physical and the spiritual. You are princes and princesses of the Most High. How does that affect your generosity? If the Holy Spirit says to give, do you cringe or instantly obey with joy?

We have had people give to the needs of others that which they really couldn't afford from a practical sense. They could do it because they realize how rich they are in Christ. They really believe it is more blessed to give than receive. (Acts 20:35) The balance in your bank account has nothing to do with how rich you are. That is hard concept for most of us to grasp, but it is essential to realize that if you are to become a generous soul. You just need to see that in Christ you are truly rich. Abram was beginning to realize how truly rich he was and so he could be generous with Lot. In that generosity, Abram became even wealthier. The Proverbs tell us that there is that which withholds but tends to poverty, and that which scatters abroad and yet increases. (Proverbs 11:24) That is exactly what happened to Abram and Lot.

Commented [notes14]: 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Matt 5:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 1 Cor 6:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Eph 1:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. John 13:3-5 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. Psalms 23:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 10 For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. Psalms 50:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today. Deut 8:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 21 So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, 1 Cor 3:21 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 24 One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. Prov 11:24 (NIV)

Abram put relationships over financial gain. He made their relationship a higher priority. In the end, Abram will end up with much greater wealth than his greedy nephew, but wealth was not his motivation. His heart was to keep relationships on higher level than material possessions. That should be the heart of every believer.

¹⁰ 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.) ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Lot looked over the land and chose the greenest area. The grass was greener there, but the spiritual influence of the area was extremely evil. He moved eastward. We have seen that eastward pattern as moving away from the Lord. He moved to the very edge of the Promised Land.

¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. ¹³ Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD. Lot will end up as a judge in the gate of Sodom. He has lived around Abram long enough to know the message he proclaimed. Being a respected person of the city meant trade opportunities. He could develop more contacts for the sale of his animals and dairy products. Yet, the evil he had to come in contact with vexed his righteous soul daily. (2Peter 2:7,8) So why didn't he leave? The opportunities for wealth and prestige seem to have captured his heart.

Evil has an allure. Even when we know better, the seduction of evil can tantalize our soul with suggestions of satisfaction. The redeemed soul recognizes this as a desire of the old nature and hates the remaining presence of that nature within. It disgusts us, and yet it teases us with false promises. Lot was playing with fire, and we will soon see that he will be burned by it.

Are you in the proximity of evil? Why? (Proverbs 3:7) Coach Bill McCartney suggests that you draw the line where temptation begins and then stay ten yards back. Lot's positioning of himself near Sodom is going to cost him dearly. If we dwell among the evil, the judgment that falls on them will fall us. Of course I'm not talking about leaving the world, or avoiding all contact with the unredeemed; I'm talking about camping there! We'll see the consequences in the next chapter.

¹⁴ The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, "Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. When Abram stepped out in faith and believed the promise of God and put his relation with Lot above material possessions, God reiterated His promise to him and even added to it. Just as Lot looked and saw what he wanted, now the real Owner of the land told Abram to look in every direction. "It's yours and your seed's forever!" He promised. What has God promised you in His word? Lift up your eyes child of God! Look at all that is yours in Christ Jesus and let your heart be filled with peace. (Romans 8:17)

Commented [notes24]: 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men
8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)--
2 Peter 2:7-8 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.
Prov 3:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
Romans 8:17 (NIV)

When God promises something twice, it's because we are having a hard time grasping the idea. That is when He gives us a double confirmation. We are often slow to understand what it is God is trying to tell us. Our faith is weak because we have doubts about what God said. So, He tells us again with a clarification. If you are uncertain about the word of the Lord to you, ask for a double confirmation. That is the assurance that Abram received in that verse.

¹⁶ *I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted.* This is a figurative prophecy. We must understand the Hebrew mind and how they used pictures to make a point. God was not being literal here. We know that because they believed this passage to be fulfilled in the days of Solomon. [1Kings 4:20](#) The picture is of a huge number that is difficult or even impossible to count. This was a stretch for this childless man to believe. God would also say they would be numerous like the stars. Whether Abram watched where his feet went by day or the stars overhead at night, he was reminded of that his offspring would be numerous. ([Genesis 26:4](#)) But the greater fulfillment is the people of faith whose faith goes back to that of their father Abram. ([Galatians 3:7](#))

¹⁷ *Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.* ¹⁸ *So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the LORD.* Abram returned to the place where He had first seen the Lord. There in the midst of the pagan idolatry, He stood his ground for the covenant keeping God, YHWH. His faith is growing. His confidence in God is increasing. He is becoming our father of faith. ([Galatians 3:29](#))

You can be a peacemaker like Abram when you realize all that you have in Christ. You can put relationships over financial gain. You can become a generous soul when you discover how truly wealthy you are. You are the heir to the promises given to Abram if you are in Christ. How wealthy does that make you, blessed child of faith? Lift up your eyes and look. Walk through this spiritual land. God has promised it to you!

Commented [notes27]: 20 The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. [1 Kings 4:20](#) (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, [Gen 26:4](#) (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 7 Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. [Gal 3:7](#) (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. [Gal 3:29](#) (NIV)