

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Check Your Methods

Take time to get to know your learners. Some of your students are visual learners; and some are hands-on learners. Use a variety of learning styles and resources during your sessions. Pay attention to what engages your learners. Also let them talk! It's one way you'll know your learners are growing in discipleship.

Check Your Tension

This week's session on relational conflict may be difficult to teach because of the cultural tensions in our country. Your students will have many questions and will probably be experiencing many emotions related to the topic. Prayerfully prepare this week. Be prepared to have Scripture verses available that explain God's will and way for believers to respond to conflict. Be prepared to defend truth and share God's love.

LOOK BACK

Welcome learners and guests. Review the "Live It" challenge (p. 63) and allow volunteers to briefly share their experience in living it out. Tell them that we learned our faith increases as we trust God through our challenging circumstances. Invite learners to share any insights they gained from last week's session.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Begin the session by inviting learners to brainstorm various types of relational conflicts and write them on a board. Some examples of relational conflicts can be between mother and daughter, two best friends, employer and employee, and even racial conflict. Discuss how far relational conflict can potentially go. Explain that we all will face conflict at one time or another. How we respond to conflict

is what matters to God. Summarize the session introduction about suspension bridges (p. 66). Explain that we will look closely at Abram's example of handling relational conflict.

TRANSITION: Read **The Point: "Trust God when conflict disrupts your relationships"** and **The Question: "How can trust in God help us during conflict?"** to transition into the lesson.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Confront Conflict Appropriately // Genesis 13:5-8

OBJECT LESSON: Use the "Object Lesson" (p. 140) to illustrate the potential damage of family conflict.

READ: Invite a learner to read Genesis 13: 5-8.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 140) to provide the background for verses that lead up to today's passage. Remind learners that when Abram was in Egypt, he thought he had to take matters into his own hands. Now, because of God's mercy and faithfulness, Abram is trusting God to take care of him.

DISCUSS: In Genesis 13 Abram is faced with another test of faith. Lead learners to discuss: "Should he trust God's promise or trust in his wealth and human wisdom? What's your guide for making choices?" How you respond to life's circumstances can make you resentful or respectful. How you react to others can make you hurtful or helpful. How you respond to God can make you critical or Christ-like. It all boils down to choices.

GUIDE: Read the paragraph about Abram and Lot that begins "Their collective wealth ..." (p. 66). This shows that the tension was heating up. Explain that as the leader of the large assembly, Abram had a choice: he could ignore the conflict, or he could confront it. Abram chose to confront it. Abram didn't run from the conflict; he had the courage to face it head on, and he did so by first thinking of

THE POINT: TRUST GOD WHEN CONFLICT DISRUPTS YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.

his relationship with Lot who was his nephew and whom he loved.

ASK: “Why is it difficult to deny yourself and serve others first?”

GUIDE: Lead learners to discuss Abram’s desire to avoid conflict. Emphasize that since they were in a land among unbelievers, it was important not to quarrel and to set an example that they worshiped the one true God. Discuss the impact of Abram’s humility in the situation.

DISCUSS: Ask the question on p. 67: “What are some early steps we can take to avoid or reduce conflict?” Allow time for learners to answer. Then ask: “What does Abram’s response reveal about his heart and his relationship with God?”

Consider the Needs of Others

// Genesis 13:9-11

READ: Invite a learner to read Genesis 13:9-11.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 141) to provide the narrative for the conflict between Abram and Lot. Point out that Abram loved his nephew Lot and wanted the best for him. Right or left, Abram finally knew he could trust God. He was able to humble himself because he had learned that God would provide for him. Though Abram had the right to choose because he was the elder, he yielded knowing that God would be with him.

ASK: Invite learner to ask the question on page 67: “why is humility a key when solving relational tension?”

READ: Read the paragraph that begins “By allowing Lot to ...” (p. 67) to further illustrate Abram’s humility:

ASK: “How does knowing your true identity in Christ help you to humble yourself before people who have hearts filled with contempt for you?”

GUIDE: Invite a learner to read Genesis 13:11 again. Emphasize that Abram desired to please the Lord, but Lot desired to please himself. Lot chose what he could see, not what God expected of him: “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

Lot made the greatest mistake by making a choice with no regard for Abram.

DIGGING DEEPER: Invite a learner to read “Digging Deeper” (p. 67). Discuss the question that follows the feature. Using the commentary for verse 11 (p. 141), explain the consequences of Lot’s poor decision.

Remain Confident in God’s Provisions // Genesis 13:14-18

READ: Invite a learner to read Genesis 13:14-18.

ASK: “How can we guard our hearts against the desires of the world and be more God-centered?”

DISCUSS: Lead learners to discuss the differences between Abram and Lot. Note that Abram didn’t have to make provision for himself because he had the sure promises of God.

GUIDE: Set the context for verses 14-18 by using the commentary on page 141. Point out that Abram must have felt pain, watching his nephew leave. It’s amazing that God would speak to Abram after Lot left and the first promise He would reaffirm is that Abram and “his offspring” would receive the land.

SAY: “Abram was learning to obey God without any wavering, and this is His call to us. Like Abram, we won’t always get it right but as we trust and obey; God will grow our faith.”

EXPLAIN: Point out that chapter 13 ends with Abram’s obedience. He moved his tent under God’s direction and again built an altar to the Lord.

ASK: Invite learners to respond to the question on page 69: “How can we approach conflict in a godly way?”

READ: Invite a volunteer to read the paragraph that begins “Reconciliation and forgiveness are not ...” (p. 69) to discuss the impact of godliness which leads to forgiveness.

CLOSE THE SESSION

DID YOU KNOW?: Use “Did You Know?” to close the session. Guide learners to discuss the question at the end of the feature. Remind learners of **The Point: “Trust God when conflict disrupts your relationships”** and **The Question: “How can trust in God help us during conflict?”**

CHALLENGE: Encourage learners to meditate on Live It (p. 69) this week and evaluate areas of their lives they are having difficulty with trusting God.

PRAY: Close the session in prayer, asking God to allow us to see others through eyes of compassion. May we view others higher than we see ourselves.

OBJECT LESSON

Obtain a large chocolate bar. Take it out of the package and break it into two pieces, one piece visibly larger than the other.

SAY: “Imagine that a mother shows her two children a delicious candy bar that they both like. After the children express their desire to have it, the mother breaks the bar into unequal portions and allows them to decide who gets which piece.”

ASK: “How could a situation like this cause conflict in a family?” Allow learners to discuss.

DISCUSS: Lead learners to share how difficult it could be to put others interests above your own. Read Philippians 2:4, “Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.”



COMMENTARY

GENESIS 13:5-8

Verse 5. The material blessings of Lot were due in large part to the fact that he had been “traveling with Abram.” Lot had flocks, which would have meant sheep or goats or both. The word for herds refers to cattle or oxen. The measure of wealth for nomads was the number of animals they had, and Lot had plenty. He also had tents. He later would be living in a house when the angels came to Sodom (Gen. 19).

Verse 6. Lot and Abram had so much wealth they could not stay together; in particular, they had too many animals. There was not enough grazing land and water resources for both Lot and Abram to stay together with their servants, herdsmen, and all the many possessions they had. The summer months would have been especially difficult since it was so dry in that area.

Verse 7. The herdsmen of the two men begin to quarrel with one another. The quarreling started in the fields because that’s where the animals grazed, and it may have been more than just verbal disputes. There was also an insufficient amount of water for everyone and their animals. The presence of the Canaanites and the Perizzites added to the difficulties the two men and the herdsmen faced. These two tribes had the most fertile land and the most bountiful water supplies, so the herdsmen of Abram and Lot would be left to spar over whatever was left.

Verse 8. Abram wanted to avoid conflict in the family. The arguments had started in the field between the herdsmen, but now Abram and Lot were quarreling too, so Abram said, “let’s not have quarreling between you and me.” Abram graciously proposed a solution to end the conflict. If Lot agreed, the dispute would be resolved, and there would be peace in the family. His solution helped to prevent future conflicts between the two men, and also strengthened a caring family relationship, especially Abram toward Lot.

GENESIS 13:9-11

Verse 9. Abram's solution to the conflict with his nephew was simple and generous. He told Lot to separate from him, and he allowed Lot to choose whichever land he desired. Abram was growing in his faith, and he knew God would provide for him. Abram could have told Lot what to do, but he put Lot's interests above his own.

Abram knew that future blessings for Lot would be dependent on Lot's love for God, so Abram made sure that Lot would have no reason to be upset with him at this critical juncture in their relationship.

Verse 10. Unfortunately, Lot had his heart set on pleasing himself. He had not grown in his faith to love God with all his heart. His love was for this world, so he looked to see what land would be best for himself. He noticed abundant sources of water on the plain of the Jordan as far as Zoar.

Verse 11. "Lot chose the entire plain of the Jordan for himself." Abram desired to please the Lord, but Lot desired to please himself. Lot got what he wanted, but it would not turn out to be what was best for him. The best the world has to offer often leads to emptiness, and this was true for Lot. He would lose his possessions, his wife, and then end up in a cave with his two daughters (Gen. 19).

"Lot journeyed eastward." In Genesis 3:24, the cherubim were placed to the east of the garden of Eden, which suggests the Lord drove out Adam and Eve east. Traveling eastward may have symbolized descending into sin or exile at times. The symbolism is suggestive, but Lot's actions indicate he made a choice based on his desires and not God's guidance.

GENESIS 13:14-18

Verse 14. God promised the land to Abram, even the land Lot had chosen for himself. After Lot departed, one wonders what Abram was thinking. When he went to Egypt, he had trusted in man's wisdom, but now Abram was trusting the Lord. Lot chose the land he wanted, but God chose the territory He desired for Abram. God told Abram to

look in each direction, "north and south, east and west." Abram only needed to trust and obey God, and God would provide all he needed and more. It's the same for each of us. We may think we know what we need, but God knows what we need much better than we do.

Verse 15. God promised Abram, "I will give you and your offspring forever all the land that you see." God would give to Abram all the land that Abram could see and even more than he could see, and God promised that territory would be his and his descendants forever. God is faithful to keep His promises, and He can do above and beyond what any of us can imagine. Such would be the case with these promises to Abraham.

Verse 16. God promised that the land would belong forever to the descendants of Abram, and God promised Abram even more. God would make his offspring "like the dust of the earth." No one can count how much dust there is on earth, and Abraham would have more descendants than anyone could count. Abram was a man of faith who would receive God's promises, including a family of descendants who could not be counted.

Verse 17. God told Abram to get up and walk around the land He would give to him. The command to walk around the land, through its "length and width," was likely symbolic language to indicate legal ownership. God would later tell the Israelites, "Every place the sole of your foot treads will be yours" (Deut. 11:24).

Verse 18. Abram was learning to obey God without hesitation. As a result of hearing God's promise, "Abram moved his tent and went to live" as God led him to do. Abram didn't always respond this way, but he was learning to trust and obey the Lord as God patiently grew his faith. He "went to live near the oaks of Mamre at Hebron," and he immediately "built an altar to the LORD." This new location was his home base for the rest of his life. He realized it was essential that he worship the Lord continually. Despite many ups and down, Abram trusted the Lord, and the Lord fulfilled His promises to Abram and his descendants.