



Resolving Conflicts

Abraham and Lot give us a lesson to help us better deal with conflicts

Notes:

1. The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.
2. This Bible study was derived from "Living Your Christian Values" by Ralph W. Neighbour, Jr. (pages 100-101).

What you will learn:

1. Five steps to resolve conflicts when you are in authority.
2. Five steps to resolve conflicts with those in authority.

Let's begin by reading our Scripture reference: Genesis 13.

Genesis 13:1-5 - Who accompanied Abram on his journey up from Egypt?

His family and all that he had as well as Lot's family with all that he had.

What was the relationship between Abram and Lot?

Abram was Lot's uncle. In fact, he was the elder brother of Lot's father, the family patriarch.

Genesis 11:27 - This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot.

So who had the most authority between Abram and Lot?

Abram. See how useful genealogies can be?

Who was responsible for the well-being of the entourage?

As patriarch, this responsibility fell to Abram.

Genesis 13:1-5 - How would you describe Abram and Lot's economic condition?

Abram was *"very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold"*. Lot was also well off with flocks and herds and tents.

Genesis 13:6-7 - What happened between Abram and Lot's herdsmen?

The land was not able to support both their herds so this caused strife between them.

What did the strife between Abram and Lot's herdsmen indicate? What was really behind the strife?

Lot had a selfish, independent spirit, his herdsmen simply reflected the attitude of their master.

Genesis 13:6-7 - What impact did this strife have on the Canaanites and the Perizzites?

It was a poor witness for men supposedly following the only true God.

Who are the Canaanites and the Perizzites of today?

The unsaved who watch what goes on between different Christian denominations and within churches. If someone needs an excuse not to get involved in church, they can easily cite strife among Christians as proof we are no different from the world.

Where did Jesus say, "By this all will know that you are my disciples if you're fundamental and you organize a church"?

He didn't say this, instead, He said:

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

Genesis 13:8-9 - Who offered a solution to the strife between Abram and Lot?

Abram, the one in authority.

Genesis 13:8-9 - What solution to the strife did Abram propose to Lot?

That they separate and Lot got to choose which land to take for himself. Abram would take the leftovers. This kind of reminds me about resolving how my brother and I would divide the last piece of pie when we were kids. I'd usually offer to cut it in half and let him choose. No matter which piece he chose, I'd thank him and carry on like he let me have the bigger piece. (The Lord helps me not to be like this today.)

Could Lot have made the same suggestion Abram did? Why didn't he?

Lot could have made the same suggestion but didn't take the initiative because he didn't want to risk a conversation that would reveal that he didn't intend to be stuck with the less desirable land.

Genesis 13:10-11 - Which piece of land did Lot chose?

The one which looked best, the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere. (little did Lot know that the Lord was about to change the property values there.)

What might have happened if Abram did not propose a solution?

The herdsmen would continue to be in strife with each other and the situation would likely escalate to bring more problems. Lot did not recognize Abram's authority in this matter and would no-doubt insist on taking his entourage to the better looking land. Lot was happy to have Abram take responsibility for the situation but did not recognize his authority that went with it.

Genesis 13:12-13 - What was the danger to Lot in the decision that he made?

He fell into "the grass is greener on the other side of the fence" syndrome. Lot put himself in a position to be influenced by the wickedness in the world and to be drawn into God's judgment by his association with it. Lot eventually lost his

possessions, his wife, his daughters, and his own personal integrity.

Does this mean that we should form Christian communes and not associate with people in the world?

Certainly not, how can we fulfill the Great Commission if we segregate ourselves? It does mean however that we should not be so closely associated with unbelievers that they cause us to stumble. We can still witness without compromising our faith.

Who had the higher moral ground, Abram or Lot? Why?

Abram, because he trusted God for his welfare and was willing to sacrifice what he had to preserve his relationship with Lot. Jesus said that using one's worldly wealth to make friends who will welcome you into heaven is shrewd use of the funds:

Luke 16:9 - "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home."

What is "unrighteous mammon" in Luke 16:9?

The NIV translates this as "worldly wealth". Things of the world certainly are unrighteous, this is why you can't take money with you when you go to heaven. It is shrewd to convert something which will soon be worthless into something that will last forever.

Genesis 13:14-16 - How did God reward Abram's taking the higher moral ground?

He gave Abram and his descendants the land forever. Furthermore, God promised Abram that his descendants would be so numerous that they could not be counted. Abram's principles brought him great blessings from God - they are often painful to apply but always bring peace to end conflict.

How do you think God views the Middle-East "piece" process which revolves around the idea

that Israel should give up pieces of their land for peace?

God promised the land to Israel forever, He will intercede on their behalf.

Let's see if we can identify five principles Abram used in resolving his conflict with Lot...

1. Can you be responsible for someone who refuses your authority?

No - authority must accompany responsibility: you can not be responsible for those that don't recognize your authority

2. How is discipline effected when someone who refuses your rightful authority?

Discipline is impossible if someone who refuses your rightful authority.

3. Who must take the initiative to resolve the conflict?

The insubordinate person will not seek to solve the problem, the one with the responsibility must take the initiative.

4. What should your solution reveal about you?

The solution must reveal your own personal faith in God.

5. What should your solution require of the other person?

The insubordinate person should be required to face personal responsibility for every action they take.

Think of a situation that you are in, or were in, or could be in and apply these principles to come up with a solution.

Now, what if you are the subordinate? How can these principles be used by the subordinate to resolve conflicts?

1. Who has God given the authority and responsibility lie in this situation?

I am responsible to the person God put in authority over me in this situation...

Romans 13:1-2 - Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

2. What role does discipline play in your life?

Accepting discipline is an important part of my life. It reflects my awareness that God is in control as well as my obedience to Him.

3. What role should you play in the decision making process?

When I am honoring the one God has put in authority over me, I will share in the decision making process. This is empowerment.

4. What should the way you conduct yourself reveal about you?

It must reveal your own personal faith in God.

5. When you honor the one in authority, what are the consequences for that person?

The consequences of my obedient conduct will be the responsibility of the one in authority over me.

Think of a situation that you are in, or were in, or could be in and apply these principles to come up with a solution.