

## Get into the Study



5 MINUTES

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** Play a video of people fighting over something small. Then ask **Question #1**.

NOTE: A video option can be found at [BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra](http://BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra).

**DISCUSS:** **Question #1** on page 102 of the PSG: “**What’s the smallest thing you’ve seen someone fight about?**”



**GUIDE:** Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 103 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of trusting in God when conflict occurs by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

## SESSION 3

# Confidence in the Midst of Conflict

### THE POINT

Trust God when conflict disrupts your relationships.

### LIFE CONNECTION

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.

### THE PASSAGES

Genesis 13:5-11,14-18

### THE SETTING

Abram and Lot had returned from Egypt, wealthier than when they had left, but their excessive wealth caused problems. They could not remain together because the land would not support them both. Abram graciously chose to avoid conflict by suggesting that Lot take his possessions and leave, but he allowed Lot to decide which land would be his. Lot’s choice would lead to his demise, and Abram would call on the Lord and receive new and wonderful promises.

## GENESIS 13:5-8

**5** And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

**6** And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

**7** And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

**8** And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

**1** ▶ *Verse 5.* The material blessings of Lot were due in large part to the fact that he **went with Abram**. Lot had **flocks**, which would have meant sheep or goats. He may have had both. The word for **herds** refers to cattle or oxen. Again, Lot may have had both. He had become very wealthy. 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. The more livestock one had, the greater the need for pasture and water. There was not enough grazing land and water resources for both Lot and Abram to stay together with their servants, herdsmen, and all the **substance** they had. The summer months would have been especially difficult since it was so dry in that area. It is not unusual for families to have conflicts over money or possessions. Jacob would later have tension with his father-in-law Laban over Jacob's wealth (31:1-2). And Genesis 36:7 shows that Jacob and Esau also parted ways due to the greatness of their belongings.

*Verse 7.* Abram and his nephew Lot had too many animals and not enough grazing land for them, so 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. The herdsmen may have begun fighting

**RECAP:** But one of the most difficult tensions we must manage is relational tension. We can't escape it. The tension in some relationships may have been stirring like a steady current for a long time. Others suddenly came out of nowhere like a heavy gust of wind. So let's take some cues from Abram to see how he navigated the waters of his relationships.

**GUIDE:** Call attention to "The Point" on page 103 of the PSG: "Trust God when conflict disrupts your relationships."

**PRAY:** Transition into the study by asking God to help the group understand the importance of trusting God during conflict. Thank Him that because of our relationship with Him, our relationships with others can be beautifully restored.

### Study the Bible

#### Genesis 13:5-8



10 MINUTES

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Genesis 13:5-8 on page 104 of the PSG.

**LEADER PACK:** Display **Item 7: The Journey of Abraham** poster to give context for the events in these Scripture verses. Point to places and events on the map as they are discussed.



**GUIDE:** Use Commentary **1** on pages 111-113 to help explain the background for the conflict between Lot and Abram.

**RECAP:** As we saw in our last session, Abram displayed a lack of trust when he took his family to Egypt. Even so, during that sojourn, God allowed Abram to acquire wealth. When Abram left Egypt and returned to Canaan, he returned with a lot more than he left with—a whole lot more. And his nephew Lot apparently did as well.

with one another. 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.

The **Canaanite** had been living in the land for many years. They were an evil, idolatrous people who were a persistent enemy of Israel. Less is known about the **Perizzite**. They are one of the tribes who dwelt in the land of Canaan that was often mentioned along with the Canaanites.

Though God had brought Abram to the promised land, it was not his land yet, for **the Canaanite and the Perizzite** were there. In Genesis 15:13, God told Abram, “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.” It is best to understand the four hundred years as a round number, as Exodus 12:40-41 says the Israelites lived in Egypt four hundred thirty years and departed from Egypt at the end of that time to the very day. But that time was still to come. For now, he was back in the promised land, even if it was only temporary again.

God was gracious to the Canaanites and the other tribes in the promised land. Genesis 15:16 indicates God would give them time to repent of their sin, but a time of judgment eventually would come. However, it would not come until the iniquity of the Amorites reached its full measure. The Canaanites and Amorites were related (10:15-16), and “Amorites” is often a synonym for the Canaanites.

**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 there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee.** 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.

Family relationships are too important to allow possessions to cause division. God wanted Abram to be a blessing to others, and God was working in the life of Abram to make that happen. Abram wanted to see God's blessing on Lot, and he knew that quarreling would not bring benefits to either of them. Abram's heart and character were right before God, and his offer to resolve the conflict would be honorable and compassionate. God makes relationships right by making our hearts right, and Abram's heart was full of love for his nephew.

The eyes of Abram's heart were on the Lord, but the eyes of Lot's heart looked to the world. As we've said, Lot's wealth, to a great extent, was probably due to his close relationship with Abram, and his situation was about to change. Lot might have had confidence in the future because he got what he wanted, but his confidence would have been misplaced. His life testifies to the reality that fulfillment does not come by getting what we want. Fulfillment comes by receiving what God wants for us. ◀

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## GENESIS 13:9-11

**9** Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

**10** And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

**11** Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

**2 ▶ 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 loved Lot and wished the best for him, so he would let Lot choose which land he wanted. Abram could have told Lot what to do, but he put Lot's interests above his own. Abram had his heart set on pleasing God and not on selfish gain. He was learning to

### DISCUSS: Question #2

on page 106 of the PSG:  
**“What are some things that make conflict worse in our culture?”**

*Alternate: What are some early steps we can take to avoid or reduce conflict?*

**RECAP:** We face a decision anytime conflict arises in our relationships. Do we ignore the issue or confront it? Do we keep moving toward unity because the tension and conflict is just not worth it? This is especially true in the church and with relationships among believers. We cannot control the attitudes and actions of another individual or group, but we can control our own attitudes and actions. We must evaluate our role by asking: Am I doing my part to maintain peace? Have I done everything I can do to resolve the conflict?

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance,** bring a rope, place a cloth in the middle of it, divide group members into two teams, and challenge both groups to pull. Illustrate the concept of conflict by initiating a tug-of-war. Encourage members to find ways to manage conflict by laying down the rope in their relationships.

**TRANSITION:** Conflict happens even in the best relationships. In the next verses, we see that we are to place others' needs before our own.

## Study the Bible

### Genesis 13:9-11



10 MINUTES

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Genesis 13:9-11 on page 106 of the PSG.

**GUIDE:** Use Commentary **2** on pages 113-115 to help explain the contrast between the choices of land before Abram and Lot.

**RECAP:** Abram demonstrated the importance of putting the needs of others before our own needs, a principle Paul spelled out centuries later (Phil. 2:3-4). Any principle from God's Word is the right one, but let's be honest: putting the needs of others before our own doesn't always sit so well, especially in a conflict situation. It can be done, but we must humble ourselves first.

love the Lord with all his heart and love others as he loved himself. He considered Lot as more important than himself.

Paul would later say in Philippians 2:3-4, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Abram's action was an example of this principle. His heart was full of love for Lot, and Abram was not fearful of what the future would hold for him. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). 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. The hills and cliffs surround the Dead Sea, except where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea, and streams feed fresh water to the Dead Sea. Seasonal streams are also flowing into the Dead Sea. In ancient times, the inhabitants of the plain channeled these streams to irrigate the land, and the present-day inhabitants do the same thing.

Archaeological evidence indicates that at the time of Lot, the area was fertile. The plain of the Jordan was the fertile land on either side of the Jordan River, which was north of the Dead Sea, but it also extended south into the area around the Dead Sea. The exact site of **Zoar** was probably south of the Dead Sea, though there is some question about its precise location. Bela was an earlier name for the town (Gen. 14:8). Lot probably could not see **Zoar** from where he stood, but what he saw in that direction was beautiful to behold.

**Zoar** was one of five towns or city-states in the Dead Sea area that had their own king. The towns were Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. Because of the sinfulness of the people who lived there, God would pronounce judgment on these cities. Only Zoar would be spared, and that was due to Lot. Lot would ask the angels who were to destroy these cities if he could go and find safety at the little town close by instead of the mountains

where the angels told him to go. The angels agreed to let Lot's request, and after that, the town was named Zoar, which means *little* (19:17-22).

Lot made his decision to head for the most fertile land before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. As Lot looked out below, he saw what every herdsman would desire—a fertile plain watered by springs flowing from the hills and mountains. It was so beautiful Lot imagined it to be like the garden of Eden, like the beautiful fertile land he had seen in Egypt, which had been watered by the Nile River. His choice was easy to make. Lot apparently figured he did not need to consult God. He knew what he wanted. He knew what was best. The mention of the Lord's garden is likely a reminder of Eve's temptation in the garden of Eden. However, what looks like the best may not be the best. Lot could not see into the future. He did not know how things would turn out for him there.

**Verse 11.** Lot chose **all the plain of 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. He put himself and his desires first, and he would pay the price along with his wife and daughters (Gen. 19). Abram put the Lord first in his life, and as a result God blessed his descendants.

**Lot journeyed east.** 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. When Cain went out of the Lord's presence, he "dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden" (4:16). Genesis 11:2 indicates "people journeyed from the east," but it can mean they traveled "eastward." In the land of Shinar (Babylon) they built the Tower of Babel. 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. ◀

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## GENESIS 13:14-18

**14** And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:

**DISCUSS:** Question #3 on page 107 of the PSG: "What do you appreciate about the way Abram and Lot resolved their differences?"

*Alternate: What makes placing others' needs before our own so challenging?*

**RECAP:** As humble as Abram was, his descendant Jesus was a far greater model of humility. Jesus willingly and gladly laid down His life for us, taking the death we deserve as His own. As Christ followers, we are to lean into His example and practice humility. The only way we can truly maintain humility in any conflict is to run our words and actions through the filter of Jesus. This is a lesson we may have to learn every day, but it is a lesson—a principle—worth fighting for. When we do so, a lot of conflicts can be avoided altogether, and relationships can be restored.

**TRANSITION:** In the next verses, we see that we are to trust God to remain faithful to keep His promises.

## Study the Bible

Genesis 13:14-18



15 MINUTES

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Genesis 13:14-18 on page 108 of the PSG.

**GUIDE:** Use Commentary **3** on pages 116-118 to help explain the promise the Lord reiterated to Abram.

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance,** get a Mason jar and fill it with pebbles or loose gravel. As the group enters the room, ask everyone to write an estimate of how many pebbles or pieces of gravel there are in the jar. When you get to the third Scripture section, ask everyone to read out their guesses. Notice together the smallest and largest numbers. Then ask someone in the group to read aloud Genesis 13:16. Say: "Compare our activity to a jar full of sand. As hard as it is to count the tiny pebbles, consider how much harder it is to count sand. It's encouraging to know that when God made that promise, He already knew exactly how many people would come from Abraham."

**15** For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

**16** And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.

**17** Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.

**18** Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

**3** ▶ **Verse 14.** God promised the land to Abram, even the land Lot had chosen for himself. Lot had not consulted with God about what to do. He looked out from where he stood and took what looked most beautiful. Lot was looking out for himself. After Lot departed, one wonders what Abram was thinking. Abram was learning to put his faith in God. 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, **northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.** 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, **All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.** 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. Lot had chosen the best this world had to offer, but Abram would live in the land of promise as an outsider, "[looking] for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

**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 **seed as 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. The word for *earth* is used in different ways, but here it likely means the whole world. In Genesis 15:5, God told Abram to “look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them,” and God promised to him, “So shall thy seed be.” 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 through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it**, was likely symbolic language to indicate legal ownership. The kings of the Egyptians and the Hittites would take ceremonial walks around the territory they claimed, and God would later tell the Israelites, “Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours” (Deut. 11:24).

**Verse 18.** Abram was learning to obey God without hesitation. As a result of hearing God’s promise, **Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt** as God led him to do. Abram’s response was to obey the Lord immediately. He knew what God wanted him to do, and he did it right away! Abram didn’t always respond this way, but he was learning to trust and obey the Lord as God patiently grew his faith. God does the same for each of us.

**Abram came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and he immediately built there an altar unto the Lord.** This new location was his home base for the rest of his life, although he occasionally traveled for various reasons. Abram immediately built an altar to the Lord. He realized it was essential he worship the Lord continually.

*The plain of Mamre* was not a town or site at this time. It was the personal property of an Amorite named Mamre, who along with his two brothers, Eshcol and Aner, would later join forces with Abraham to defeat the kings who had attacked the city-states where Lot was living (Gen. 14:1-24). It seems Abram had the use of the land, and in return, he assisted in military measures to defend the area as needed.

*The plain of Mamre* was at *Hebron*. Hebron is the highest city in Palestine at a little over three thousand feet above sea level. It is about nineteen miles south-southwest of Jerusalem. The place Abram lived, also referred to as

**RECAP:** Tragically for Lot, he made a poor decision. He may have thought he was getting the better land—land that “was well watered every where, ... even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt” (Gen. 13:10)—but his decision moved him away from his uncle, whom God had obviously blessed, and into a place of compromise. Notice Lot’s downward progression. He chose land that was outside Canaan, the land promised to Abram. Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom” (v. 12), but later we find that he “dwelt in Sodom” (14:12), and finally we see that he “sat in the gate of Sodom” (19:1), a place where the city leaders sat.

**DISCUSS: Question #4** on page 110 of the PSG: **“When has God proven to you that He will take care of you?”**

**RECAP:** While we can’t control reconciliation, we can forgive. Forgiving another person can be hard—extremely hard—but it is the most healing thing to do. It takes two for reconciliation to occur, but we can still forgive regardless of how the other person responds (Eph. 4:32). Forgive and trust God to work in the hearts of others. We keep trusting that God will break through the walls.



**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 110 of the PSG: “How can trust in God help us during times of conflict?”

*Alternate: How can we benefit through conflict?*

**DO:** Direct group members to complete “Engage” on page 110 of the PSG to help reinforce “The Point.”

**GUIDE:** Refer back to “The Point” for this session: “**Trust God when conflict disrupts your relationships.**”

Mamre, is a couple of miles north of Hebron. It has been a well-watered and fertile region for more than five thousand years. It is also the location of Machpelah, the patriarchal burial site that Abraham purchased for Sarah (23:1-20). Along with Sarah, the Israelites would bury Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rebecca, and Leah at Machpelah (49:29-31). Despite many ups and down, Abram trusted the Lord, and the Lord fulfilled His promises to Abraham and his descendants. ◀

### ENGAGE

**The world has a vastly different view of handling conflict than God’s Word. How would you respond to a friend who made the following statements? (Choose one.)**

“The most important part of resolving a conflict is sharing your truth.”

“I refuse to listen to anyone who holds that point of view.”

“I think it’s best if we just don’t talk about it.”

## LIVE IT OUT

We are to trust God when conflict disrupts our relationships. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Pray.** As an act of worship, lift up those that you might have relational tension with right now. Also as you pray, a tension from your past might come to the forefront of your mind; pray for those people as well.
- ▶ **Check your pride.** In comparison to Jesus, what is the level of your humility? Go to God and ask him to reveal where your pride might be getting the best of you. Remember pride knocks you down; humility lifts you up.
- ▶ **Reconcile.** What imaginary conversation have you been having with a person that you know you need to have a real conversation with? Pick up the phone, set up the meeting, and have the difficult conversation.

## Live It Out



5 MINUTES

**READ:** Direct group members to page 111 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the applications to carry out this week.

## Wrap It Up

**SUMMARIZE:** Read or restate this idea from page 110 of the PSG:

*A continual attitude of worship and prayer keeps us leaning on Christ—and gives us confidence in the midst of conflict.*

**PRAY:** Thank God for being the healer of relationships. Ask Him to help group members recognize their need for Him in the midst of conflict.



## TIPS & TRAINING

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