

***“Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 13:1-4).***

Following his [negative experience](#) in Egypt, Abram decided to return to a place that held great significance for him. That was the place where Abram once communed with God (see [Genesis 12:7-8](#)). Despite the centuries that separate us from Abram's life, that decision offers a relevant and worthwhile example for us to follow today.

You see, Abram didn't represent God very well during his earlier interaction with Pharaoh. Yet now he returned to the region where he once ***“...built an altar to the Lord and worshipped in the Lord's name” (Genesis 12:8 CEB)***. In like manner, we can follow Abram's good example and return to a place of communion with God if our conduct has been less than ideal.

That place is God's Word, for we have an opportunity to meet with God and hear from Him every time we open the Biblical Scriptures ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)). As we're told in the New Testament book of Hebrews...

***“The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12 GNT).***

The active, living word of God will thus leave us better equipped to handle similar life situations in a God-honoring manner.

Genesis 13:2 also tells us that, ***“Abram was very rich. He owned many cattle, sheep, and goats, and had a lot of silver and gold” (CEV)***. One source tells us, *“An Arab sheik is considered rich who has a hundred or two hundred tents, from sixty to a hundred camels, a thousand sheep and goats respectively. And Abram being very rich, must have far exceeded that amount of... property.”* (1)

So, God blessed Abram with an abundance of material wealth and prosperity. It also seems that he was in a better place spiritually as well. Unfortunately for Abram, a decision from his past was about to catch up with him.

(1) Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown. *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* [Genesis 13:2]

***“Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land” (Genesis 13:5-7).***

Earlier in Genesis chapter twelve, God directed Abram to leave his home and relatives on the way to an unspecified destination ([Genesis 12:1](#)). But at some point, Abram's nephew Lot decided that he wanted to accompany Abram as well. That decision ultimately led to the conflict described in the verses quoted above.

While it might not seem obvious from the text, this episode offers another teachable moment from Abram's life: we can often avoid future trouble simply by doing what God tells us to do now. If Abram had followed God's instructions in leaving his relatives behind, he could have avoided the labor dispute that arose between his employees and his nephew's employees.

Unfortunately, that would not be the end of Abram's problems with Lot. In fact, the next chapter will tell us how Abram had to gather a small army to rescue Lot when he was captured as a prisoner of war (see [Genesis 14:11-16](#)).

So while Abram followed God's instructions, he disregarded the part about leaving his relatives behind. Instead, Abram allowed his nephew to come along, and that decision eventually led to a number of problems. Therefore, it is crucial to heed this example and avoid disregarding portions of God's Word. If we follow God's instructions now, we can often avoid trouble later.

This issue between Abram and Lot arose because they had insufficient space for their possessions. The way they resolved that problem will offer a great deal of insight into each man's character...

***“So Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left'”***  
***(Genesis 13:8-9).***

Abram's response to this development clearly reflected his commitment to honor God. Abram never attempted to pressure Lot or make demands, even though he had a legitimate claim to the land. He simply told Lot, “Go wherever you want and I'll take the rest.”

Abram could afford to be generous with Lot in light of God's promise to him: ***“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”*** (Genesis 12:2-3 NIV).

These promises gave Abram the confidence to allow Lot to make his choice without pressure to manipulate his decision. In a general sense, what was true for Abram is also true for us today. For instance, consider the following excerpt from the book of 2 Corinthians regarding God's provision for His people...

***“You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others”*** (2 Corinthians 9:7-8 NLT).

Before we consider Lot's response to Abram's proposal, let's discuss the negotiation process that typically governed these types of agreements. In Abram's day, these arrangements were guided by a set of rules that outlined the prescribed course of action for each party.

In this instance, Abram's age, leadership position, and patriarchal status offered certain rights and advantages in that culture. Abram could thus enforce his prerogative and choose where Lot would go. But instead of acting on that privilege, Abram graciously offered Lot the right of first refusal.

Lot, being the younger man, was then expected to insist that Abram choose first, while subtly expressing his own preference. Negotiations then continued in that manner until both sides were satisfied with the result. <sup>(1)</sup>

However, Lot chose to respond to Abram's offer in a culturally unexpected manner...

***“And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom” (Genesis 13:10-12).***

So instead of deferring to Abram, Lot seized upon the opportunity to move to an area known as the Jordan Valley ([CEV](#)). If we take some time to consider the factors that influenced Lot’s decision, we should be able to gain some valuable insights that can help us make good choices today.

First, we’re told that Lot looked upon the land, saw the advantages of one particular area, and immediately took Abram up on his offer. In other words, Lot recognized a favorable opportunity and immediately capitalized on it.

While that approach may sound perfectly reasonable to some, there’s no indication that Lot gave any regard to God’s will in this matter. There’s no evidence to suggest that Lot sought God’s direction in making this decision, nor does it appear that he solicited any counsel from his faithful uncle Abram.

In fact, there’s nothing to indicate that Lot gave any consideration to God at all. It seems that Lot’s decision was solely based on one factor: *“What’s best for me?”*

(1) Abraham will later employ a similar approach in negotiating with the neighboring Hittites (see [Genesis 23](#)).

Lot’s experience with Abram serves to illustrate the decision-making process that many follow today. That process often begins and ends with the following consideration: *“What serves my interests right now?”* Unfortunately, that approach will eventually lead to a great deal of trouble for Lot.

Instead of [judging on appearance](#), Lot should have allowed God to inform his decision-making process. The following excerpt from Paul the Apostle’s letter to the Philippians offers some insight into this idea....

***“If it is the Lord’s will, I hope that I will be able to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be encouraged by news about you. He is the only one who shares my feelings and who really cares about you. Everyone else is concerned only with their own affairs, not with the cause of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:19-21 GNB).***

Paul’s confidence in Timothy stemmed from a simple observation: ***“He takes a genuine interest in your welfare” (GW)***. That made Timothy different from others who were self-seeking, self-interested, or self-absorbed.

Another translation of that passage illustrates that difference in a forthright manner: ***“The others think only about what interests them and not about what concerns Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:21 CEV)***.

Even though Lot preceded Paul by many centuries, his mindset was much like those “others” Paul mentioned here. Lot was concerned about his own interests, but not necessarily God’s.

It’s rare to find those (like Timothy) who factor ***“what concerns Christ Jesus”*** into their decision-making process. Unfortunately, it’s more common for people to decide what’s best for themselves and then ask for God’s blessing. Then there are those who seek guidance from God’s Word, but may be reluctant to act on it if it necessitates a sacrifice or clashes with their preferences.

Timothy was different- he was interested in knowing and doing God’s will first. We can follow that good example by seeking God’s direction in prayer, reading His Word, and obtaining counsel from others who lives honor God.

Unfortunately, Lot didn't share that mindset. That oversight will later lead to several tragic events involving Lot and his family.

***“Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom” (Genesis 13:12).***

While this passage may appear insignificant now, these seemingly trivial details will take on greater importance later. However, the following verse foreshadows the trouble ahead...

***“But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (Genesis 13:13).***

So Lot decided to make his home on the outskirts of an area where bad things were going on. With that in mind, let's review the sequence of events that ultimately led to this decision...

- God instructed Abram to leave his relatives and travel to an unspecified destination.
- Instead, Abram permitted his nephew Lot to accompany him on that journey.
- Abram later offered Lot his choice of land area.
- There is no indication that Lot sought God's wisdom or direction before acting on Abram's offer. Instead, he made his selection based on what looked good to him at the moment.
- Lot chose to relocate to a ***“wicked and sinful”*** area.

The chapters that follow will unveil the grave consequences of those choices.

***“And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.***

***And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.”***

***Then Abram moved his tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord” (Genesis 13:14-18).***

We should note that God did not speak with Abram again until he acted on God's instruction to separate from his relatives ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). In other words, God did not interact with Abram until he did what he was told.

This is another instance where Abram's experience offers guidance for today: if we are seeking God's direction, we must do what He tells us first. If we are not following God's Word now, we should not be surprised if He is unresponsive to our requests for His direction.