

Genesis 13:1-13; 18:16-33; 19:1-3 and 15-29

Aim of lesson

To learn from the unselfishness and faith of Abram, and from Lot's experiences, that to choose the easy way can often lead to other problems and difficulties.

Background study

Matthew 16:26-27; Luke 17:28-29; Colossians 3:12-13; 2 Peter 2:6-8. Look up geographical and archaeological details about the cities of the plain.

Suggested outline of lesson

Begin the lesson by talking about arguments and quarrels. Move on from particular instances that some of the class may be willing to describe (such as harsh words about the biggest piece of cake, or whose turn it is to go first) to general principles. Establish that quarrels are caused by jealousy, greed or selfishness.

Abram and Lot

Describe and compare the two main characters in this lesson, Abram and Lot, being careful not to be too scathing about Lot. You should always have at the back of your mind, as you talk about Abram's nephew, what the New Testament judgement is. Lot, a member of Abram's family and treated as a son in the household, would have been taught Abram's beliefs and values. He would know of the reasons for leaving their old home. He had grown rich and now had his own workers, flocks and family to care for.

Abram had also become very rich, and as the two men moved about Canaan it became increasingly difficult to find sufficient pasture and water in one place for the combined flocks. The searing heat and the shortage of water led to frayed tempers and bitterness among the herdsmen. Quarrels and fighting broke out as each group tried to secure adequate supplies for their respective flocks. Both groups became selfish, jealous and short-sighted, concerned only with the immediate needs.

The parting of the ways

When Abram heard of the quarrelling, he said that it must stop. He approached Lot to try to settle the matter and suggested that they should separate, since all the land was open to them. As head of the tribe, Abram had the right to make the first choice, but he gave Lot the privilege. The Jordan valley was fertile, lush and inviting, the ideal place for rearing flocks and herds - Lot couldn't resist it. Perhaps he was also attracted to the nearby towns, wanting to share their social life and security. Maybe he was impetuous, too, inconsiderate of the guidance, training and protection he had received for so many years. Was it Lot's impatience for possession as he looked at this "promised land" which caused him to be blind to the possible dangers? Note the ominous tone of chapter 13, verse 13. Lot did

not foresee that the evil of Sodom would affect his life so greatly and lead to distressing circumstances. Ask the children to consider the alternatives which faced Lot, and to say what choice they would have made and for what reasons. An understanding of Lot's possible motives will help the children to appreciate more readily the point of the lesson.

Abram, the peacemaker, accepted Lot's choice without question and prepared, as he had promised, to go in the opposite direction. Remind the children that it was on this occasion that God renewed his promise to give Abram all the land. Abram, for his part, confirmed his trust in the Lord and worshipped, building an altar in the new area to which he moved.

What really matters?

Discuss the effects of Lot's choice upon the two men. Whose life was richer as a result? Lot soon discovered that his choice brought him many anxieties and problems. He was surrounded by people whose way of living was evil and objectionable and it distressed him greatly. The apparently easy way of comfort and wealth seemed important when he made the choice but he found that peace of mind and happiness, which could not be bought, were far more important. His family was influenced by their neighbours and, whilst he prospered, his children grew to be like the violent, godless people of the city. Abram, whilst keeping clear of the cities, nevertheless was compassionate towards the people. Even when he knew of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he pleaded God's mercy for the sake of those who were righteous.

A divided family

When the warning came, Lot's own family was divided. Although he urged them to leave, only his wife and two daughters left with him, and then only under protest. The sons-in-law stayed behind, having no faith in Lot's prediction. His wife, too, was heedless of the instructions they had been given and, because of her disobedience, was destroyed. Describe the enormity of the catastrophe, probably of seismic origin. No doubt God was using natural forces to bring about his will.

Relevance to the children's lives

When you listen to the news, or hear what is happening day by day in the big cities, can you think of any ways in which people today might be like those of Lot's time? Are they violent? Do they use unpleasant speech, and behave badly towards others? Are people too greedy for money? How can we stop ourselves becoming like this? What can we learn from Lot's mistake?

Worksheets

The mixed up words are 'IMPATIENT' AND 'UNSELFISH'.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, in our daily lives, please give us the strength and courage not to join in with unpleasant talk or bad behaviour, but to please you in all we say and do. Amen.

Memory verse

“For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?” (Matthew 16:26, RSV).