

# BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

**Sermon Series:** When Relationship Collide  
**To be used with:** Session Three: Stand Down  
**Sermon Title Possibilities:**  
 Refusing to Quarrel  
 Taking the Higher Road  
**Scripture:** Genesis 13:1-18

**Connection to Unit Theme:** One of the hardest things to do is not to fight back when you are hurt. When Jesus said turn the other cheek most of us don't have a clue what that means because it goes against the grain of our self-preservation. Compromise is not in most people's vocabulary. But consider the needless and mindless struggles that could be avoided if we sought a common ground and found a way to settle the matter before it got blown out of proportion. Sometimes the best course of action is simply to refuse to fight.

## Introduction:

Abraham Lincoln wrote William Butler, a hot-tempered political associate, regarding the boundaries of new counties. Lincoln refused to be drawn into a fight. His letter was dated January, 26 1839. It reads:

*Dear Butler:*

*Your letter of the 21st is just received. You were in an ill-humor when you wrote that letter, and, no doubt, intended that I should be thrown into one also; which, however, I respectfully decline being done.*

*My respects to Mrs. Butler & Salome. Your friend in spite of your ill-nature*  
*Lincoln*

Abraham Lincoln showed strength of character by refusing to be drawn into a fight. He understood what Fridtjof Hansen wrote, "**War** will cease when men refuse to fight."

Another Abraham showed the same resolve. He and his wife, Sarah, have returned to Canaan from their ill-fated trip to Egypt. They had ventured to Egypt to escape famine. While in Egypt, Abraham had lied to save his life. The lie worked for a while until God intervened. Then Abraham was forced to leave the country after having been publicly humiliated by the Pharaoh. But he left a much richer man than he came. In spite of his sin, God has blessed him with great wealth in Egypt. And now it is his wealth that will become a source of conflict with his nephew, Lot.

Found in this story are several steps to avoiding a quarrel.

- 1. Seek God in all matters of life. (vv. 1-4)** Abraham was a spiritual man who "made an altar" and "called upon the name of the Lord" (v. 4). Throughout Abraham's life we see a common occurrence: He pitched his tents, but he built his altar. He placed God first in his life.

Lot, on the other hand, was a sinful man. He had opportunity to be spiritual as he walked with Abraham, but we don't read of Lot's building an altar or calling on the name of the Lord. Instead, we see Lot looking toward Sodom (v. 10); then he moved toward Sodom (v. 11-12); and finally he moved into Sodom (14:12). Instead of being a pilgrim who made progress, Lot regressed into the world and away from God's blessings.

People who are always fighting and in conflict, more often than not, are out of fellowship with God. It is not that Christians shouldn't fight. God is a God of peace. He desires his people to be a people of peace. When we seek him in all areas of life and we will take the first step toward avoiding quarrels.

- 2. Seek peace at all costs. (vv. 5-8a)** Abraham was a peacemaker. He recognized the situation and the conflict unfolding. He knew the land could not support both families. His and Lot's herds could not live together, the land would not support them both. If they continued to live in close proximity to one another there would be strife. Abraham did not want that.

Lot, on the other hand, was a troublemaker. We see him making no attempt to resolve this situation. He wanted his way, his will, and his rights.

Peacemaking is not the absence of conflict, avoidance of strife, appeasement of parties, or the accommodation of issues. A peacemaker is someone who is actively seeking to reconcile people to God and to one another.

- 3. Seek relationships over rights. (v. 8b)** Abraham valued the relationship over the location and possession.

Lot valued his rights over the relationship. Lot made three mistakes: He chose himself over others. He chose his occupation over his family. He chose the immediate over the future. He had misplaced priorities.

- 4. Seek a resolution over winning. (vv. 9-13)** Abraham yielded his rights. He gave Lot a choice. Abraham had a right to choose whatever land he wanted and let Lot take the leftovers. He was the older, the chief of the clan. God had promised the land to Abraham, not to Lot. Abraham had every right to decide the issue and tell Lot what to do, but he graciously yielded his rights. What mattered to Abraham was a solution to the problem. He placed the interest of Lot over his personal interest.

Lot wanted his rights. He was selfish. He looked at the options. He chose the lush fields with plenty of water.

- 5. Seek righteousness so God can bless you. (vv. 14-18)** Abraham trusted God. And God rewarded him, as a result.

Lot trusted himself. And, it cost him dearly.

Sometimes we get so caught up in the heat of conflict, seeking our way, that we forget that God is ultimately in control and his will always prevails.

**Conclusion:** Too often we get caught up in who wins the fight, when God wants us to experience greater victory. God honors those who yield their rights because they believe in God's promises.

So much strife could be avoided in the family and in the church if we would put a premium on our relationships, set aside our rights, and let the Lord take care of us.

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