

# The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide

## Lesson 10: Abram and Lot; God's Covenant of Faith

### Genesis 13:1–15:21

#### Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This rich section moves from Abram's generosity toward Lot, through the encounter with Melchizedek, to the covenant of chapter fifteen and the pivotal statement that Abram's faith was 'counted to him as righteousness.' Doctrinally, the lesson teaches faith that trusts God rather than grasping, integrity that depends on God rather than the world, God Himself as the believer's reward, and, at its heart, justification by faith. Genesis 15:6 is one of the most important verses in the Bible, quoted by both Paul (Romans 4; Galatians 3) and James (James 2) to explain how a person is made right with God.

Teach justification by faith accurately and guard it carefully. Abram was counted righteous because he trusted God's promise; righteousness was credited, not earned. This is the gospel pattern: we are saved by God's grace, received through faith, not by meriting our standing through law-keeping. But take equal care not to import the denominational doctrine of 'faith only' or the 'sinner's prayer.' The faith that justified Abram was a living, trusting, obeying faith, the very faith that left Ur, built altars, and would later climb Mount Moriah. James points to this same Abraham to show that faith without works is dead and that his faith was 'completed by his works' (James 2:22). In the New Covenant, this saving faith comes to expression in repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26–27; Romans 6:3–4); we must not read a bare, workless 'faith alone' back into Abraham. Note also that in the covenant ceremony God alone passes between the pieces, underscoring that the covenant rests on God's gracious commitment.

Formationally, the passage calls students to a faith that holds the world loosely, that keeps its integrity, that treasures God above His gifts, that prays honestly, and that rests in being made right with God by trusting Him. Lead them to marvel that the way of salvation was the same for Abram as for us: not earning, but believing the God who keeps His promises in Christ.

#### Question 1

##### Student Question:

*When their herdsmen quarreled, Abram let Lot choose first and took whatever was left, trusting God rather than grasping for the best portion (13:8–12). What does this reveal about the difference between a life of faith and a life of self-interest?*

#### Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter thirteen opens with a problem that wealth often brings: there was not room for both Abram and Lot and their flocks, and strife broke out between their herdsmen. How Abram handles it reveals the quality of his faith. As the elder and the bearer of God's promise, he had every right to choose first. Instead he defers to Lot: 'Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right.'

This is faith in action. Abram could afford to be generous because he believed God, not the best real estate, was the source of his future. A person convinced that God holds his future does not need to grasp; he can open his hand. Self-interest grabs; faith releases.

Notice the outcome. The moment Lot departs, choosing the lush Jordan valley toward Sodom, God speaks to Abram and renews the promise of the entire land. The man who let go received more than the man who grabbed. This is the recurring math of faith: 'whoever loses his life... will save it' (Mark 8:35).

Help students see the contrast between the two men. Lot walks by sight, choosing what looks best and drifting toward Sodom. Abram walks by faith, content with God's provision. The chapter quietly asks which way we will live.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Faith that releases versus self-interest that grasps.
- Generosity flowing from confidence that God holds our future.
- The math of faith: the open hand receives more than the grasping one (Mark 8:35).
- Walking by faith (Abram) versus walking by sight (Lot).

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does Abram's offer to Lot reveal his trust in God?
- Why can a person of real faith afford to be generous?
- How does the outcome reward Abram's open hand?

### **Question 2**

#### **Student Question:**

*Where in your life are you tempted to grasp, to secure the best for yourself, to insist on your rights, to compete for advantage, rather than trusting God to provide and care for you?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question presses the matter of grasping versus trusting. We all feel the pull to secure the best for ourselves, to insist on our rights, to compete for advantage, to protect our interests. It feels prudent, even necessary, in a world of scarcity.

Help students see what grasping reveals: a functional unbelief that God will provide. When we cannot let go, cannot defer, cannot lose an argument or an advantage, it is often because we are trusting our own grip rather than God's care. Abram's open hand was the fruit of a settled trust.

Name the arenas. Grasping shows up in money, in relationships, in conflicts where we must win, in our defensiveness about reputation, in our reluctance to be generous. The specific shape differs, but the root is the same: holding on because we are not sure God will hold us.

Invite the alternative. What would it look like, in one concrete situation, to release the grip, to defer to another, to give generously, to lose gracefully, trusting God to provide and to vindicate? Faith is proved not in theory but in the open hand.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Grasping as a sign of functional unbelief in God's provision.
- Insisting on rights and advantage versus trusting God's care.
- Generosity and deference as expressions of faith.
- Releasing our grip in concrete situations.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where are you most tempted to grasp rather than trust?
- What does grasping reveal about what we really believe?
- What would releasing your grip look like in one real situation?

### **Question 3**

#### **Student Question:**

*Returning from battle, Abram is met by Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," and gives him a tenth of everything, then refuses to take any spoils from the king of Sodom (14:18–24). Who is Melchizedek, how does he point forward to Christ (Hebrews 7:1–3), and what does Abram's refusal of the spoils reveal about his trust in God?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

The encounter with Melchizedek is brief but profoundly significant. This king of Salem (Jerusalem) is also 'priest of God Most High.' He brings out bread and wine, blesses Abram, and Abram gives him a tenth of the spoils. Melchizedek appears suddenly, without recorded genealogy, both king and priest.

Hebrews 7 unfolds his significance: Melchizedek is a type, a foreshadowing, of Christ. Like Melchizedek, Jesus is both King and Priest, a priest not from the tribe of Levi but 'after the order of Melchizedek,' a priest forever (Hebrews 7:1–3, 17). The fact that Abram, ancestor of the Levitical priests, paid tithes to Melchizedek shows the superiority of this priesthood, and thus of Christ's, over the later Levitical order.

Then note Abram's striking refusal. The king of Sodom offers Abram the recovered goods, but Abram refuses to take 'a thread or a sandal strap,' lest Sodom's king claim, 'I have made Abram rich.' Abram has just been blessed by God Most High, Maker of heaven and earth; he will not let a pagan king take the credit for his prosperity. His confidence and his provision come from God alone.

Draw out the integrity here. Abram distinguishes between the blessing of God (gladly received, gladly tithed) and the entanglements of the world (firmly refused). He guards his testimony, refusing to be beholden to Sodom. His treasure is God, not gain.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Melchizedek as a type of Christ, our King and Priest forever (Hebrews 7:1-3, 17).
- The superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical order.
- Abram's tithe as worshipful acknowledgment of God Most High.
- Integrity: refusing entanglement with the world so God alone gets the credit.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does Melchizedek point forward to Christ?
- Why did Abram refuse the spoils offered by the king of Sodom?
- What is the difference between receiving God's blessing and being entangled by the world?

### **Question 4**

#### **Student Question:**

*Abram would not let the king of Sodom be able to say, "I have made Abram rich." Where might you be tempted to compromise your integrity, or to depend on the wrong source, for the sake of money, security, or advancement?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question applies Abram's integrity to the student's relationship with money and advancement. Abram refused to let Sodom's king say, 'I made Abram rich.' The principle is that we should guard our integrity and our dependence on God, refusing entanglements that compromise our testimony or our trust.

Help students examine where they might compromise for gain. The temptations are familiar: shading the truth to close a deal, accepting an arrangement that quietly compromises convictions, depending for security on a source God would not approve, letting ambition override honesty. Sodom's offer always sounds reasonable.

Highlight the heart issue: where do we look for our security and provision? Abram's refusal flowed from his confidence that God Most High, not the king of Sodom, was his provider. When

God is our source, we can refuse compromising offers; when we doubt Him, we grab what the world holds out.

Invite a specific reckoning: a place where money, security, or advancement tempts the student to compromise integrity or to depend on the wrong source, and what trusting God as provider would look like there.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Guarding integrity and testimony in matters of money and advancement.
- Refusing entanglements that compromise convictions or dependence on God.
- God as our true source of security and provision.
- Compromise as flowing from doubt that God will provide.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Where are you tempted to compromise integrity for gain or security?
- On what source are you really depending for your provision?
- What would trusting God as provider change in that area?

### **Question 5**

#### **Student Question:**

*God said to Abram, "I am your shield; your reward shall be very great" (15:1). What does it mean that God offers Himself, and not merely His gifts, as our reward? Why does this matter for how we relate to God?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

God's word to Abram in 15:1 is staggering in its generosity: 'I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.' The reward God offers is not first of all land, descendants, or wealth; it is Himself. 'I am your shield' (your protection) and your 'reward' (your treasure). The greatest gift God gives is God.

Help students grasp how radical this is. We are prone to value God for His benefits, to treat Him as a means to the things we really want. But the deepest blessing of salvation is God Himself, restored fellowship with our Maker. The psalmist captures it: 'Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you' (Psalm 73:25).

Draw the contrast with how we often pray. We come to God for His gifts, healing, provision, success, and these are right to seek. But if we would be content with the gifts apart from the Giver, our hearts have gone astray. God offers Abram not merely things but a relationship with Himself, and that is the true reward.

This reorients the whole Christian life. Heaven's joy is not mainly golden streets but the presence of God. To know God as our 'very great reward' is to have a treasure that no loss can take and that satisfies more deeply than any gift.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- God offering Himself, not merely His gifts, as our reward (Genesis 15:1).
- The deepest blessing of salvation as fellowship with God Himself.
- Valuing the Giver above the gifts (Psalm 73:25).
- God's presence as the true joy of heaven.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean that God offers Himself as our 'reward'?
- How can we tell if we treasure God's gifts more than God?
- How would treasuring God Himself change your prayers and desires?

### **Question 6**

#### **Student Question:**

*Is God Himself your treasure, or have His gifts (blessings, comfort, security, even answered prayers) become more precious to you than He is? What would it look like to delight in God as your "very great reward"?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question turns the searchlight inward: is God Himself our treasure, or have His gifts eclipsed Him? It is a searching question, because the gifts of God are good and easy to love, sometimes more easily than the Giver.

Help students discern the symptoms. We may know our hearts have drifted when answered prayer delights us more than God's presence, when the loss of a blessing shakes our faith in God's goodness, when our devotion rises and falls with our circumstances. These reveal that the gifts have become more precious than the Giver.

Offer the path back. Delighting in God Himself grows through worship, through dwelling on who He is, through the Word and prayer, through gratitude that traces every gift back to the Giver. We learn to enjoy the gifts as expressions of God's love rather than as substitutes for Him.

Invite reflection: what gift has the student been treasuring above God, and what would it look like this week to seek God's face and not only His hand?

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Discerning whether God's gifts have eclipsed God Himself.

- Symptoms of a heart that treasures gifts over the Giver.
- Growing delight in God through worship, Word, and gratitude.
- Seeking God's face, not only His hand.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What gift of God are you most tempted to treasure above Him?
- How does your faith respond when a blessing is taken away?
- What would seeking God's face, not just His hand, look like this week?

### **Question 7**

#### **Student Question:**

*Abram brought his honest struggle to God, his pain at still being childless despite the promise, and God responded not with rebuke but with the promise of descendants like the stars (15:2-5). What does this teach us about bringing our real questions and aches to God?*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Abram's response to God in 15:2-3 is remarkably candid. Instead of polite agreement, he voices his real pain: 'O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless?' The promise of descendants has gone years unfulfilled, and Abram brings his ache honestly to God.

Notice how God responds, not with rebuke but with reassurance. He takes Abram outside and shows him the stars: 'So shall your offspring be.' God meets honest faith with fresh promise. He is not threatened by our questions when they are brought to Him in trust rather than thrown at Him in rebellion.

Help students see the difference between faithful lament and faithless complaint. Abram's was the former: he brought his struggle to God, still trusting Him, still in relationship. The Psalms are full of this kind of honest prayer. God invites us to bring Him our real selves, not a polished performance.

This is liberating for many believers who think faith means hiding doubt and disappointment behind a brave face. Abram shows that we can be both honest and faithful, pouring out our hearts to the God who can bear them and who answers with His promises.

#### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Bringing honest struggles and questions to God in faith (Genesis 15:2-3).
- God meeting faithful lament with reassurance, not rebuke.
- The difference between faithful lament and faithless complaint.
- Honesty and faith held together, as in the Psalms.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- How does Abram model honesty with God?
- What is the difference between faithful lament and faithless complaint?
- How does God respond to Abram's honest ache?

## **Question 8**

### **Student Question:**

*Where do you tend to hide your doubts, fears, or disappointments from God rather than bringing them honestly to Him in prayer? How might Abram's example change the way you pray this week?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This question invites students to pray with Abram's honesty. Many believers hide their doubts, fears, and disappointments from God, as though He could not handle them or as though faith required pretending. The result is often a thin, performative prayer life that never touches the real heart.

Help students see that God already knows our hearts; hiding fools only ourselves. Bringing our true struggles to Him is not a lack of faith but an exercise of it, for it means we still believe He hears and cares. The alternative, polite distance, slowly starves the relationship.

Encourage the practice of honest prayer modeled in Scripture: telling God the truth about our pain, our confusion, our longing, while still entrusting ourselves to Him. The Psalms give us language for this; so does Abram here.

Invite a concrete step: a real fear, doubt, or disappointment the student has been keeping from God, and a commitment to bring it honestly to Him this week.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Bringing real doubts, fears, and disappointments honestly to God.
- Honest prayer as an exercise of faith, not a lack of it.
- The danger of polite, performative prayer that hides the heart.
- The Psalms and Abram as models of honest, faithful prayer.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What do you tend to hide from God rather than pray about honestly?
- Why is honest prayer an act of faith rather than a failure of it?
- What will you bring honestly to God this week?

## **Question 9**

### **Student Question:**



*Genesis 15:6 says, "And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness." What does it mean to be counted righteous through faith (see Romans 4:1-5; Galatians 3:6-9)? And how do we understand this rightly, given that genuine faith is a trusting, obeying faith and not mere mental agreement (James 2:21-24)?*

### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

This is the doctrinal heart of the lesson, and it deserves the most careful teaching. Genesis 15:6 says, 'And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.' Abram was declared righteous, not because he had earned it by his works, but because he trusted God's promise. Righteousness was credited to him, reckoned to his account, received by faith. This is the gospel pattern of justification.

Paul builds his whole argument on this verse. In Romans 4 he insists that Abraham was justified by faith and not by works, 'so that the promise may rest on grace' (Romans 4:16). To the one who trusts God, 'his faith is counted as righteousness' (Romans 4:5). In Galatians 3 he uses the same verse to show that those who have faith are the true children of Abraham. Salvation has always been by God's grace, received through faith, not earned by human merit. This is gloriously good news.

Now guard the truth from a serious distortion. Some take 'faith alone' to mean a bare mental agreement, or a one-time 'sinner's prayer,' apart from any obedience, and call that the whole of salvation. But that is not the faith of Abraham, and Scripture itself forbids it. James points to this very Abraham and says his faith 'was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works' (James 2:22), concluding that 'a person is justified by works and not by faith alone' (James 2:24). There is no contradiction with Paul. Paul rejects works of merit by which we earn salvation; James rejects a dead faith that never obeys. The faith that justifies is a living, trusting, obeying faith, the same faith that left Ur, built altars, and would climb Moriah.

Apply this to the gospel as the New Testament presents it, without reading New Covenant specifics anachronistically back into Abram's day. For us who live after Christ, this saving faith is not mere assent; it lays hold of Christ and comes to expression in turning from sin and being united with Him. Scripture describes that response: hearing the gospel, believing in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repenting, confessing Him, and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27). None of this is earning salvation; it is the obedient form that genuine, justifying faith takes. We are saved by grace through faith, and that faith obeys.

Then note the covenant ceremony of 15:7-21, which underlines grace. In that culture, both parties to a covenant would normally pass between the divided animals, in effect saying, 'May this be done to me if I break this covenant.' But here only God, in the form of a smoking fire pot and flaming torch, passes through, while Abram sleeps. God alone binds Himself. The covenant rests on God's faithful commitment, not on Abram's performance. The whole scene preaches

grace: God will keep this promise, and He will do it at His own cost, a cost ultimately paid at the cross.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- Justification by faith: righteousness credited, not earned (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-5).
- Salvation by God's grace through faith, resting on grace, not human merit (Romans 4:16).
- The faith that justifies is a living, obeying faith, not bare assent (James 2:21-24).
- Paul and James in harmony: against works of merit, and against dead, workless faith.
- In the New Covenant, saving faith expressed in repentance, confession, and baptism into Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4), without reading these anachronistically into Abram.
- Guarding against 'faith only' as mere mental assent or a 'sinner's prayer'.
- The covenant ceremony (God alone passing through the pieces) underscoring grace.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- What does it mean that Abram's faith was 'counted to him as righteousness'?
- How do Paul and James fit together on faith and works?
- How does genuine, justifying faith come to expression in the New Testament?

### **Question 10**

#### **Student Question:**

*Look back over the whole passage. Name one specific way God is calling you to live by faith, to hold your possessions loosely, to treasure God Himself, to pray honestly, and to rest in being counted righteous through trusting Him.*

#### **Commentary and Teaching Notes**

Use this capstone to gather the passage's call to a life of faith. We have seen faith that holds possessions loosely, faith that keeps its integrity, faith that treasures God Himself, faith that prays honestly, and faith that rests in being counted righteous through trusting God. The question is which of these God is pressing on a particular student.

Press for the specific. For one it is an open hand toward a contested advantage; for another, integrity in money; for another, treasuring God above His gifts; for another, honest prayer; for another, resting in justification rather than striving to earn God's approval.

Close with the wonder of grace. The same way of salvation that God showed Abram, righteousness received by trusting Him, is the way open to us in Christ. We do not climb to God by our merit; we trust the God who keeps His promises, and that faith takes hold of Christ and walks in obedience. To be formed by this passage is to live by that faith, with open hands,

honest hearts, and confidence resting not in ourselves but in the God who counts the believing sinner righteous.

### **Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues**

- A life of faith: open hands, integrity, treasuring God, honest prayer, resting in grace.
- The same way of salvation for Abram and for us: righteousness by trusting God.
- Faith that takes hold of Christ and walks in obedience.
- Confidence resting in God's faithfulness, not our merit.

### **Discussion Prompts**

- Which aspect of Abram's faith is God pressing on you?
- What concrete step of faith is He calling you to take?
- How does resting in justification by faith free you from striving to earn God's approval?