

Abraham: The Father of the Faithful, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Letting Go: Abram and Lot Part Ways

Genesis 13

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Genesis 13 sits between Abram's failure in Egypt and the formal covenant of Genesis 15, and it functions as a portrait of restored, generous faith. The chapter opens with Abram deliberately retracing his steps to the altar at Bethel, a quiet picture of repentance and renewed worship after the Egypt detour. It then turns on a conflict that prosperity created between Abram's and Lot's herdsmen, and on Abram's remarkable decision to surrender his rights as the elder and let Lot choose first. The historical and cultural weight matters: in that world the senior kinsman with the divine promise had every claim to choose, and Abram's deference would have looked like foolish weakness to his contemporaries.

Two contrasting ways of life drive the lesson. Lot walks by sight, choosing the well-watered plain by its appearance while ignoring its proximity to wicked Sodom, a choice whose tragic end Genesis 19 records. Abram walks by faith, releasing the visible advantage and trusting the unseen promise, and immediately God reaffirms and enlarges the covenant. Help the class see the biblical principle that faith can afford generosity because it trusts God's provision, and that decisions made by mere appearance often set trajectories we do not foresee. When you reach the reaffirmed promise of land and offspring, you may note briefly that its ultimate fulfillment is in Christ and His people; the study will develop this in Lesson 12, so keep the focus here on faith and generosity.

Pastorally, this lesson presses on two common struggles: our reluctance to let go of our rights in relationships, and our habit of making major decisions by appearance and short-term gain. The aim is not merely to admire Abram's generosity but to move students toward concrete acts of open handed trust, and toward weighing their choices by faith and spiritual discernment rather than by what merely looks best.

Question 1

Student Question:

After returning from Egypt, Abram went back to Bethel, "to the place where his tent had been at the beginning," to the altar he had made there, and "called upon the name of the LORD" (vv. 3–4). Coming right after his failure in Egypt, what does this deliberate return to the altar reveal about repentance, restoration, and where a faltering faith finds its footing again?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Draw attention to the geography, because the narrator clearly wants us to notice it. Abram does not push forward into something new; he goes back, retracing his exact route to the altar he had built before the Egypt episode. After failure, his first move is to return to the place of worship and call on the LORD. This is a picture of repentance and restoration, even though the word is not used.

Make the point that restoration usually means returning, not reinventing. Abram does not invent a new spirituality to recover from his fall; he goes back to the basics he had abandoned: the altar, the name of the LORD, worship and dependence. For us, recovery from drift is rarely found in something novel; it is found in returning to the ordinary means God has given, the assembly, the Lord's Supper, prayer, and the Word.

Note that worship comes before the next test. Only after Abram is reestablished at the altar does the conflict with Lot arise, and only a settled, worshipping Abram is able to respond with such generosity. Renewed communion with God precedes faithful living; we act well out of a restored relationship, not before it.

Apply it to the believer who has stumbled. The way back is not endless self-punishment but a return to the altar. God did not require Abram to grovel; He received him back into worship and fellowship. The repentant heart that comes home finds God ready.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Restoration as returning to God, not reinventing our faith
- The ordinary means of grace as the path back from drift
- Worship and renewed communion preceding faithful living
- Repentance that comes home to the altar rather than wallowing in shame

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the narrator stress that Abram returned to the very same altar?
- What are the ordinary practices a drifting believer most needs to return to?
- How does renewed worship prepare us to live faithfully under pressure?

Question 2

Student Question:

Abram's instinct after a failure was to go back to the place of worship and start again with God. Where in your life do you need to "return to the altar," to come back to the practices and place of worship you have drifted from? What has pulled you away, and what would returning look like this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Make this concrete and current. Drift is rarely a dramatic departure; it is the slow fading of habits that once held us close to God: assembling with the saints, regular prayer, time in Scripture, the table of the Lord. Help the class identify the specific practice that has quietly slipped.

Invite honesty about what pulled them away. For Abram it was famine and fear; for us it is often busyness, discouragement, a wounded relationship in the church, or a sin we would rather not bring into the light. Naming the cause helps loosen its grip.

Then point to the simplicity of the return. Abram did not need a grand gesture; he needed to go back to the altar. Encourage each person to name one concrete step of return this week, whether that is showing up Sunday, restarting daily prayer, or coming clean about a sin that has kept them away.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Recognizing the slow drift from spiritual practices
- Honestly naming what pulled us away
- The simplicity and accessibility of returning to God
- A concrete first step back this week

Discussion Prompts

- Which spiritual practice has quietly slipped in your life?
- What pulled you away from it?
- What is one concrete step of return you can take this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

When strife arose, Abram, as the elder with the covenant promise, had every right to choose first, yet he gave the choice to Lot (vv. 8–9). What does this striking generosity reveal about the kind of faith that can afford to let go of its rights, and how does trusting God’s promise free a person to be generous?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Establish how much Abram gave up. By age, by status, by the covenant promise, the choice was rightfully his. In that culture, deferring to a younger man would have seemed like weakness or folly. Abram’s offer was not a minor courtesy; it was a deliberate relinquishing of a real and significant advantage.

Connect the generosity to faith. Abram could let go because he was not depending on the land to secure his future; he was depending on God’s promise. A person who believes God will

provide does not have to fight for the best portion. Faith is what makes radical generosity possible; the open hand is the natural posture of a heart that trusts God.

Note the priority Abram placed on peace and relationship over advantage: “Let there be no strife between you and me, for we are kinsmen.” He valued the relationship more than winning. This anticipates the New Testament call to count others more significant than ourselves (Philippians 2:3–4) and to seek peace.

Help the class see the freedom in this. Grasping is exhausting and corrosive; the constant need to win, to get our due, to come out ahead, poisons relationships and steals peace. Faith breaks that cycle. Because God holds our future, we can hold our rights loosely, and that is a profoundly freeing way to live.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith as the ground of radical generosity
- Relinquishing real rights and advantages for the sake of peace
- Valuing relationship and peace over winning (Philippians 2:3–4)
- The freedom of the open hand versus the bondage of grasping
- Trusting God’s provision rather than fighting for the best portion

Discussion Prompts

- How does trusting God’s provision make generosity possible?
- Why is grasping for our rights so exhausting and corrosive?
- Where would peace be worth more to you than winning?

Question 4

Student Question:

Abram could release his rights because he trusted God to provide. Where are you currently grasping your rights, your turn, or your way, perhaps in a relationship that has grown tense over exactly such insistence? What would it cost you to open your hand, and what does your grip reveal about your trust?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Bring the principle home to specific relationships. Most strained relationships involve someone insisting on a right: to be heard, to be repaid, to get their preference, to have the last word, to receive an apology first. Help the class identify the actual relationship and the actual right they are clutching.

Press the diagnostic edge: our grip reveals our trust. When we cannot let go of a right, it is often because we do not believe God will take care of us if we do. Like Abram, the question is whether we trust God enough to release the advantage and let Him provide and vindicate.

Count the cost honestly, then weigh it against the gain. Opening the hand may mean losing an argument, absorbing an unfairness, or giving up something we are owed. But Abram's example shows that what we release in faith, God more than makes up. Invite one concrete act of open handed trust this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Insisting on our rights as a common source of relational strife
- Our grip on rights revealing the limits of our trust
- Trusting God to provide and vindicate when we let go
- A concrete act of open handed surrender

Discussion Prompts

- What right are you currently insisting on in a relationship?
- What do you fear will happen if you let it go?
- What would opening your hand look like in that situation this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Lot "lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere" and chose it by what it looked like, even as he moved toward wicked Sodom (vv. 10–13). What does Lot's decision teach us about the danger of choosing by appearance and short-term advantage rather than by faith and spiritual discernment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Trace Lot's decision-making carefully, because the text is pointed. He "lifted up his eyes and saw," and he chose by sight. The valley looked like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. His criterion was visible prosperity, and his criterion alone. The narrator notes ominously what Lot ignored: the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD.

Highlight the contrast with Abram, who later is told by God to "lift up your eyes and look," but to see the land through the lens of the promise. Lot saw with the eyes of appetite; Abram would see with the eyes of faith. The same act, lifting up the eyes, becomes either worldly calculation or believing trust, depending on what governs the heart.

Name the danger of choosing by appearance. Lot's choice looked like the smart move and was, in worldly terms, the better deal. But he weighed only the immediate and the visible, not the

spiritual environment he was moving his family into. Decisions made by appearance routinely ignore the question that matters most: where will this take me, and who will I become there?

Apply it broadly. We make Lot's mistake whenever we choose a job, a home, a relationship, or an opportunity purely by what it looks like it will give us, without asking what it will do to our walk with God. The well-watered plain can be a trap when it sits next to Sodom.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Choosing by sight and appearance versus by faith and discernment
- Weighing only the immediate and visible while ignoring spiritual consequences
- The same act of seeing governed either by appetite or by faith
- Asking where a choice will take us, not just what it will give us
- Worldly prosperity as a possible trap near spiritual danger

Discussion Prompts

- What did Lot fail to consider when he chose by appearance?
- How can the same opportunity look different through the eyes of faith?
- What question should we add to "what will this give me?" when we decide?

Question 6

Student Question:

Lot chose what looked best without weighing where it would lead. What decision are you making, or have you made, mainly on the basis of appearance, comfort, or short-term gain, without seriously asking where it is taking you spiritually? How might you bring faith and discernment back into that choice?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ask the class to put a real decision on the table, present or recent: a move, a job, a purchase, a relationship, how they spend their time and money. The goal is to apply Lot's warning to an actual choice rather than to discuss it in the abstract.

Help them add the missing question. Lot weighed the prosperity but not the proximity to Sodom. We can do the same with a higher salary that pulls us from the church family, a relationship that is exciting but draws us from Christ, an opportunity that looks ideal but slowly erodes our convictions. The discerning question is what this choice will do to our walk with God and our household's faith.

Encourage active discernment, not paralysis. Bringing faith into a decision means praying over it, seeking counsel from mature believers, and honestly weighing spiritual cost alongside material

benefit. Invite each person to name one decision they will reexamine through the eyes of faith this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Applying Lot's warning to a real, current decision
- Weighing spiritual cost alongside material or comfort benefit
- Prayer and godly counsel as tools of discernment
- Avoiding both reckless choosing and decision paralysis

Discussion Prompts

- What current decision have you been weighing mainly by appearance?
- What spiritual question have you left out of that decision?
- Who could you ask to help you discern it well?

Question 7

Student Question:

The moment Lot departed, the LORD spoke to Abram and reaffirmed and even expanded the promise: all the land, offspring like the dust of the earth, given forever (vv. 14–17). What does it reveal about God's character and economy that the man who surrendered the best land was the one who received everything?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Mark the timing the narrator emphasizes: "after Lot had separated from him," the LORD spoke. Abram's act of surrender was immediately met by God's renewed and enlarged promise. The man who gave up the choice portion is told to lift up his eyes and receive all of it, north, south, east, and west, with offspring beyond counting.

Draw out the divine economy. This is the upside-down arithmetic that runs through Scripture: those who lose their lives find them, those who humble themselves are exalted, those who give receive. Abram did not manipulate this outcome; he simply trusted and let go, and God proved Himself no one's debtor. The generous hand is the hand God loves to fill.

Guard against turning this into a transaction. The point is not that generosity is a clever technique to get more, a kind of spiritual investment scheme. Abram gave with no guarantee of return; that is what made it faith. God's blessing flows from His character as a generous, faithful God, not from our leveraging of a formula.

Note briefly the promise itself. The land and the innumerable offspring point beyond Abram's lifetime; he will die owning only a burial plot. The promise's deepest fulfillment comes in Christ

and the countless people of faith who become his offspring (a theme for Lesson 12). For now, let the class marvel that God meets surrender with abundance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's upside-down economy: surrender met with abundance
- God as no one's debtor (compare Mark 10:29–30)
- Generosity as faith, not a technique to get more
- Blessing flowing from God's generous character
- The promise reaching its fullness beyond Abram's lifetime in Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the text stress that God spoke right after Lot departed?
- How is God's economy different from the world's arithmetic of grabbing first?
- How do we keep generosity from becoming a self-serving strategy?

Question 8

Student Question:

We often fear that letting go means losing out, that if we do not grab for ourselves, no one will provide for us. Where is that fear operating in your life right now? How does God's response to Abram's open hand challenge the belief that you have to grasp in order to come out ahead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Name the fear plainly, because it is nearly universal: if I do not look out for myself, no one will. That fear drives much of our grasping, our anxiety about money, our jockeying for position, our reluctance to be generous. Help the class locate where that fear is actually operating for them.

Set Abram's outcome against the fear. Abram's open hand did not leave him empty; it left him standing in the fullness of God's promise. The believer's security does not rest on grabbing first but on the faithfulness of a God who provides. This does not promise that open handed living is always comfortable, but it does promise that God can be trusted with what we release.

Move toward trust in action. Combating this fear is not merely thinking different thoughts; it is taking a step of generous, open handed faith and discovering God's faithfulness. Invite the class to name one place where they will refuse to grasp this week and trust God with the result.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The near-universal fear that letting go means losing out
- Security grounded in God's provision rather than in grasping
- Open handed faith tested and proven in action
- Generosity as a deliberate refusal of the scarcity mindset

Discussion Prompts

- Where is the fear of losing out driving you to grasp?
- How does Abram's outcome challenge that fear?
- Where can you practice open handed trust this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

This chapter sets two ways of living side by side: Abram, who walked by faith in an unseen promise and let go of visible advantage, and Lot, who walked by sight, chose the visible best, and drifted toward Sodom (with ruin waiting in Genesis 19). How does Scripture call us to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7), and why do the choices we make by mere appearance so often set a trajectory whose end we do not foresee?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This heaviest block draws the two ways into sharp doctrinal focus. Set them clearly side by side. Abram lived by faith in a promise he could not see, releasing what he could see. Lot lived by sight, choosing what looked best with no thought for the unseen spiritual consequences. The chapter is a study in two governing principles: faith and sight.

Define walking by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). It does not mean ignoring reality or despising wisdom. It means letting the unseen realities of God, His promises, His kingdom, His judgment, weigh more heavily in our decisions than the visible and immediate. The person of faith asks not only what can be seen and gained, but what God has said and where this path leads in light of eternity.

Trace Lot's trajectory, because Scripture invites us to. He first looked toward Sodom, then pitched his tent toward Sodom, and by Genesis 19 he is living in Sodom and is nearly destroyed with it. No single step looked catastrophic, but the direction was set early. This is how drift works: choices made by appearance establish a trajectory, and trajectories carry us to ends we never intended. Help the class see that the danger of a worldly choice is rarely the first step; it is where the road goes.

Add the sobering note from 2 Peter 2:7–8, that Lot was a righteous man, yet his choice tormented his soul daily and brought his household to ruin. A believer can make a sight-driven choice that does not damn him but does devastate his peace, his family, and his usefulness. Faith counts that cost; sight ignores it.

Bring it to the warning of James 4:4, that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Lot moved toward the world incrementally and was nearly swept away. The call to walk by faith is finally a call to set our hearts on God and His promises rather than on the well-watered plains

that lie next to Sodom. Christ Himself is the great example: He endured the cross, despising its shame, for the unseen joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:1–2). That is walking by faith.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Two governing principles: faith and sight (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- Walking by faith as weighing the unseen and eternal over the visible and immediate
- How small sight-driven choices set unforeseen trajectories
- Lot as a righteous man whose choice still ruined his peace and household (2 Peter 2:7–8)
- Friendship with the world as enmity with God (James 4:4)
- Christ as the supreme example of faith looking to the unseen joy (Hebrews 12:1–2)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it actually mean to walk by faith and not by sight?
- Why is the danger of a worldly choice usually found in its trajectory, not its first step?
- How does Lot's example warn even genuine believers?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole chapter. You have seen a man return to the altar, surrender his rights, refuse to grasp, and receive far more than he gave up, while his nephew grabbed the best and started down a road toward ruin. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this part of Abram's story. Where is He calling you to let go, to walk by faith rather than sight, and to trust Him with the outcome this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Gather the threads and press for one specific response. Some will need to return to a neglected altar; some to open their hand in a strained relationship; some to reexamine a decision they have been making by appearance. Help each name their own, concretely.

Point to Jesus as the pattern and power. Jesus did not grasp; though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself (Philippians 2:5–8). The open hand of Abram is a faint sketch of the open hand of Christ, who let go of everything and trusted the Father, and was exalted. Being formed into His image means learning to hold our rights and advantages as loosely as He did.

End with encouragement. The God who met Abram's surrender with abundance is the same God who promises that those who lose their lives for Christ's sake will find them. The class can let go in confidence, because the One they trust is utterly faithful.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Moving from admiration to a concrete act of letting go
- Jesus who did not grasp but emptied Himself (Philippians 2:5–8)
- Being formed into Christ's open handed trust
- Confidence that God meets faithful surrender with provision

Discussion Prompts

- What is the one thing God is calling you to let go of this week?
- How does Christ's own self-emptying give you courage to release it?
- What would walking by faith rather than sight look like for you right now?