

Genesis 13 Small Group Discussion Questions

Opening Question: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?

Tell them: Last week we saw how Abram escaped famine by taking his family to Egypt. Then, once in Egypt, Abram decided to give his wife to Pharaoh in order to save his life. Abram didn't make the best choices, but his mistakes are a lesson to us as believers. This week we looked at Genesis 13 and the parting of ways between Abram and his nephew Lot.

In this chapter, Abram leaves Egypt and goes back to Bethel. Genesis 12:7-8 refers to this place where Abram was when God made his covenant with him. Let's reread this section to remind ourselves:

*"The Lord appeared to Abram and said, **"To your descendants I will give this land."** So, Abram built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. Then he moved from there to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and worshiped the Lord." (Genesis 12:7-8)*

Genesis 13:4 shows Abram returning to this same altar. *"This was the place where he had first built the altar, and there Abram worshiped the Lord."* (Genesis 13:4)

Ask them: *Why do you think Abram would return to the place where he built his first altar to the Lord? What does the altar represent or remind him of?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael gave us four observances on Genesis 13 to help us better understand the passage:

1. **Abram returned to God's promise.** Abram returned to the place where God first made his promise, what we call the Abrahamic Covenant. **Ask them:** *What do you think this travel reversal tells us about our own lives when we mess up or make bad choices?* **Tell them: Pastor Michael said:** When we fail tests in life, we need to go back to God and his promises.
2. **Ask them:** *Do you remember why Lot picked the region of the Jordan when he was breaking off from Abram?* Pastor Michael made this his second point: **Lot's heart was still in Egypt.** **Ask them:** *Knowing that the promised land was in the other direction, what does this say about Lot's faith?*
3. **Tell them:** The third point Pastor Michael made was that **Lot looked out for himself.** This tells us something about Lot's faith as well. **Ask them:** *Have you ever been given a choice and quickly chosen the best for yourself, leaving the worst for another? Whether it's the best seat at the table or the biggest piece of cake, why do you think we tend to so quickly take the best for ourselves?*
4. **Abram looked to God.** In Genesis 13:14 God tells Abram to lift up his eyes and look out on the land. Whereas Lot looked within to make his choice, Abram looked up to God to make his choice. Then God reiterated his covenant with Abram. Let's take a look at the passage Genesis 13:14-18: *"The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, **"Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward***

and westward, ¹⁵ for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. ¹⁶ I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. ¹⁷ Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” ¹⁸ So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Ask them: *What is the first thing Abram did after receiving the promise from God? What is the purpose of an altar to the Lord? When it comes to making choices, how many of you are comfortable with letting God make them for you, by forfeiting your choice to another the way Abram did to Lot?*

Tell them: Pastor Michael told us that in Genesis 13 we can see three kinds of people in the Egyptians/Sodomites, Lot, and Abram:

1. **Ask them:** *Which characters in this passage represent **unbelievers**? The Egyptians and Sodomites, Lot, or Abram? The answer is the Egyptians and the Sodomites. They represent unbelievers. That one is pretty obvious.*
2. **Ask them:** *Which character then represents **Carnal (or infantile) believers** according to Pastor Michael? (Lot or Abram) This idea of the carnal Christian was an interesting one, and not everyone might agree, but carnal Christian refers to someone who is believes in God but is still living for the world and themselves. In other words, they are living like unbelievers with a knowledge of the Savior. **Tell them:** Every time we ask ourselves, “What’s best for me?” we may be living in the flesh, in the space of the carnal Christian.*

Ask them: *When are you most likely to live like a carnal Christian; professing love for God but living for yourself; protecting yourself, your rights, your dreams?*

Philippians 2:3-8 speaks directly to this idea of selfishness. Let’s remind ourselves: *“Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests, but about the interests of others as well. You should have the same attitude toward one another that Christ Jesus had, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:3–8)*

Ask them: *What are some ways in the current climate in which we live that we might be motivated to look out for ourselves over others? **Tell them:** Even though Jesus had the right to be God on earth, he became a servant. **Ask them:** What rights do we have that we might need to step away from in order to serve the gospel for unbelievers?*

3. **Ask them:** *Finally, which character then represents **spiritual believers** or mature believers who are living for God and His mission, not self and the world? **Tell them:** Of course, the answer is obvious, Abram as the father of the people of God, represents someone who (in this moment) is spiritually mature. **Ask them:** *In what way does Abram show his maturity in this incident with Lot and his herdsmen? **Tell them:** Pastor Michael said, “The actions of a spiritual believer are often viewed as foolish but never selfish.” **Ask them:** *What do you think of that statement?***

Tell them: In Genesis 13 we see that Abram was selfless. **Ask them:** *What enables a spiritual believer to be selfless? (answer: He looks to God for his portion and provision.)* **Tell them:** Pastor Michael said that humanity has a history of being really good at building tents for protection and provision. We choose many things based on our worldly desires. But, he said, that we forget to build altars. **Ask them:** *What are some circumstances in your past that would have been an occasion for an altar to be built so that you might never forget what God had done?*

Tell them: Finally, Pastor Michael asked, **“What do we do to avoid living a carnal life of faith?”** They were:

1. **Return to God’s promises. Ask them:** *What are some ways that we can return to God’s promises as New Testament believers?*
2. **Refuse to insist on our own way. Ask them:** *Who is up for the challenge of giving up insisting on their own way on social media? What would that look like? In what ways can we give up on insisting on our own way at home? Discuss.*
3. **Challenge your carnality. Tell them:** Pastor Michael said that always having an excuse for your errors is carnal behavior. **Ask them:** *What would be a faithful response to error? (Living a life of humility would be the opposite.)*
4. **Trust in Jesus. Tell them:** Pastor Michael said: “Sometimes God uses you by putting you in the middle of the famine, the pandemic, not to save yourself, but to witness to and save others. His mission is not your comfort it is your joy in Him alone.” **Ask them:** *Why might God have you living in the middle of this pandemic for His glory? Discuss some ways to be a witness to Him instead of a witness to conspiracy or opposition to your beliefs?*

Tell them: This week let’s all challenge our infantile behavior when it comes to the circumstances in which we live. If there is anything that encourages you to indulge your flesh, your fear, your worry, your anger, then reject it in favor of trusting the Father. Our priorities should be God first, God second and God third. Flesh fights for your right to survive, thrive, and build a bigger tent. Pastor Michael challenged us to make an altar out of our lives. *In what ways can we build altars this week to remind ourselves and the world of God’s faithfulness in the midst of the chaos in which we are living?*

Tweetable Quotes and thoughts to remember: Tell them: This week see if you can find social media opportunities to glorify God: Encourage others, build them up, don’t tear them down, support the family of faith no matter what their political opinion. Find your joy in Him alone.

1. The actions of a spiritual believer are often viewed as foolish but never selfish.
2. God’s mission is not your comfort but your joy in Him alone.
3. Help us to build more altars than tents.
4. Flesh fights for your rights. The spiritual believer fights for the rights of others.