

**Sermon Series:** When Relationships Collide

**To Be Used With:** Session Three “Stand Down”

**Sermon Title Possibilities:** “The Power of Contentment”; “You *Can* Always Get What You Want”

**Sermon Text:** [Genesis 13:1–18](#)

### **Introduction Option 1: You Can Always Get What You Want**

The Rolling Stones sang, “You can't always get what you want. But if you try sometimes, well you just might find, you get what you need.” Many of us think this way. There are things that we want, even demand, that we know we will never get. But biblically speaking, you can always get what you want. What do I mean? When your heart is aligned with God’s heart, when He is enough for you, you only want what He wants to give you. Of course you pray, seek, and labor for some things that will never come to pass, but in the end you are content with God whatever God decided for your life. He is your portion. You say with the Psalmist “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you” (Ps. 73:25). Abraham understood this and it enabled him to stand down when faced with a conflict with Lot. Let’s read our text and see what we can learn.

### **Introduction Option 2: Melting Into God’s Will**

Jeremiah Burroughs in his classic work *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* said Contentment comes “by melting his [Christian] will and desires into God's will. So that, in one sense, he comes to have his desires satisfied though he does not obtain the thing that he desired before; still he comes to be satisfied with this, because he makes his will to be at one with God's will. This is a small degree higher than submitting to the will of God. You all say that you should submit to God's will; a Christian has got beyond this. He can make God's will and his own the same. It is said of believers that they are joined to the Lord, and are one spirit; that means, that whatever God's will is, I do not only see good reason to submit to it, but God's will is my will. When the soul can make over, as it were, its will to God, it must needs be contented (Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, 18).

This is a very different understanding of contentment. Only when we are satisfied in God, and God alone, will we be content and be able to embrace whatever He sends our way with joy and patience. Abraham understood this and it enabled him to stand down when faced with a conflict with Lot. Let’s read our text and see what we can learn from Abraham.

[Read Genesis 13:1–18]

We learned in our small groups this week that we don’t have to get our way to solve a conflict. In fact, the quicker we are willing to stand down and refuse to die on every hill, the quicker the situation can be resolved. From this story we learn four key elements to handling conflict.

### **First Point: Having Much Can Sometimes Cause Conflicts (vv.1–7)**

This conflict between Abraham and Lot arose because of the physical blessings they received. Each of them possessed many flocks, servants, and herds. This put a strain on the land and

caused strife between the herdsmen (v. 7). Verse 6 tells us “their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.”

Many of us tend to think more is always better. If we had more money or time or friends, we would be happier and at peace. But rarely is that the case! We tend to put joy on hold until we obtain some goal that we think we must achieve. But we get there only to find out that we desire even more or what we pursued isn't all we hoped it would be. Men often pursue a promotion only to find themselves getting home much later, sleeping less, and devoting less time to their family and church. Conflict can arise over having much.

**Application:** Are you pursuing something right now that may cause conflict with your family, friends, or church later? Why must you have this possession, reward, or possession?

### **Second Point: Value People Over Possessions (vv. 1–9)**

Abraham would rather not be with Lot than be at odds with him. This is an important truth. Abraham yields to Lot's choice of any part of the land Lot desires. He stands down. He does not have to win this battle. He says, “Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left” (v.9). Abraham appears to value Lot over the land. He refuses to let possessions trump his love for a person.

Part of learning to stand down comes from recognizing the value of people. People matter more than possessions. We may get what we want at times, but in the process lose the person. Thomas Watson, the founder of IBM, entered a meeting once where many of the companies problems were being discussed. On the table sat a stack of papers which identified some of the biggest threats to their future success. After much discussion Watson walked over to the pile and swept his hand through the pile sending papers all over the room. He said, “There aren't categories of problems here. There's just one problem: Some of us aren't paying enough attention to our customers.” He then turned and walked out (Hans Finzel, *Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, 49). People matter. And they matter more than possessions.

**Application:** Are you focusing on possessions and achievements at the cost of people? Imagine how many conflicts might be resolved if we focused on relating well to each other and standing down to avoid severing the relationship.

### **Third Point: Learn The Danger of Greener Grass (vv.10–13)**

Lot chose greener pastures, literally! The lush and fertile land of the Jordan Valley drew his attention. The writer indicates that this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (v.10), and that the men of Sodom were wicked (v.13). We get an indication that this was the wrong decision for Lot. Abraham does not seem to care which land he gets. The allure and beauty of the land did not appeal to him.

What appears to be a better situation can, in the end, bring us great harm. We must guard against thinking that the “grass is greener on the other side.” This can be a source of pain and frustration for us, and it can cause much turmoil in our relationships.

**Application:** Guard against thinking that bigger is always better. Meditate on Philippians 4:11–13 and how Paul was content in any and every circumstance.

**Fourth Point: Rest In God’s Provision (vv.13–18)**

God had a plan and a place for Abraham. The Lord would provide. Abraham trusted this. We see his trust displayed when he built an altar to the Lord. He believed God would make good on His promises (Gen. 12:1–7). He didn’t feel the need to fight with Lot or battle for his own preferences. This is contentment in action.

As Christians we have the ultimate provision from God. We don’t necessarily have a piece of land; we have a Person. God gave His Son for us. He died and rose again to secure our place with Him (Jn. 14:1–4). That is why we can be content. We have Him as our portion and treasure.

**Application:** Are you able to trust God’s provision? Do you believe God has a plan and a place for because of what Christ did (Rom. 8:28–29)? Will you rest content in Him?

**Conclusion**

[Recap main points] You don’t have to get your way to solve a conflict. God has a better way. Stand down. Trust Him. Look to Christ as your joy. Find your contentment in Him.

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