

Series - Family

Date/s -

4 Sep 2016

Topic - Where are you pitching your tent?

Speaker/s -

Rev Vincent Lun

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like "Jesus, lover of my soul", "Through It All", "Magnificent"

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Choose to place relationship amongst family members as a priority above other interest
2. Choose to put their trust in God upfront when making decisions and on the consequences

Word [45 min]

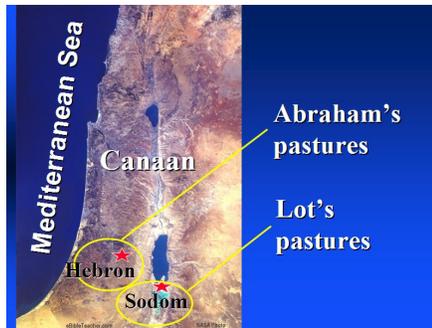
In Genesis 13, we read that Abraham and Lot had prospered, owning herds of cattle and their herdsmen were beginning to quarrel amongst themselves because the land they had could not support them. In those times, they lived in tents which represented life and family and where the tents were pitched would often have grave consequences upon the family (which included extended family members such as uncles, nephews). Abraham mentored Lot like his son and had probably given him shares of the business. However conflict arose among their herdsmen and so, both had no choice but to consider moving away from each other.

1. Put relationship above other interests (Genesis 13:8-9)

In verse 8, though Abraham had the prerogative to choose first he let Lot made the first choice instead. This is because he did not wish to have strife between them and their herdsmen as they were brethren. Abram valued his relationship with Lot and he wanted to honour him. Abraham was prepared to risk his business and family taking the seemingly not so prosperous land (in verse 7, where the "Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land") because Lot was his "brethren". He also wanted to be a good witness towards Lot and placed their relationship above his own self-interest (business).

As such, conflicts can happen between others and self in any relationships between husband and wife, children, in-laws or colleagues. God's way is to put relationships above self-interest, money, and even to put it above our aspiration for our children and their studies.

2. Decide by faith not by sight (Genesis 13:10-18)



Lot did not consult God. Lot chose by sight and ended up in Sodom (13:10-13) where 'it was well watered everywhere...' He merely looked at what he could get and saw that the land to the east is like the land of Egypt (verse 11). So, they separated from each other as Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and "Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as (*near*) Sodom." East signifies going further from God – once you go further from God, you will tend to go south as you spiral downwards. In Genesis 14, Lot moved down to Zoar and in Genesis 15, a war broke out and Lot was taken hostage. Then in Genesis 19:1, Lot sat at the gate of Sodom..." which means he was in leadership position. Now, Lot and his family had become part of Sodom. Therefore, this shows that it does not matter how fast or slow you are progressing but rather what is important is the direction you are going in life as decisions have consequences.

Although we are free to choose we are not free from the consequences of our choice. In Genesis 19, Lot and his family nearly lost his two daughters and his life to a crazy mob who wanted to sexually abuse the two guests in his house. He lost his wife (who turned into a pillar of salt) while escaping from Sodom and later committed incest with his two daughters, and became the father of the Moabites and Ammonites who became enemies of the Israelites. On the contrary, Abraham chose by faith (13:14-18).

3. Leave the rest to God (Genesis 13:14-18)

Did Abraham risk jeopardising the promise of God by saying to Lot - "If you go to the left, I will go to the right. If you go to the right, I will go to the left (13:9)"? Abraham felt secured about the promised land and decided to do it God's way. He put relationship above his self-interest by being a good testimony. He honoured Lot by letting him choose first. Can we trust God for His promises to us and to decide by faith and leave the results to Him? Right after Abraham decided to let Lot choose first, God reaffirmed the promise He gave him in Genesis 12. God not only gave Abraham land but also descendants to fill.

In Proverbs 19:21, we read 'There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel - that will stand'. It takes courage to do it God's way and not the ways of man such as having strife, politicking or strong arm tactics. We learn to let God decide because "God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply – Hudson Taylor".

Discussion Questions

1. **Reverend Vincent Lun shared on three principles when it comes to handling decisions with family members. Of the three principles, which one is the most challenging and why?** [10 mins]

Leader's notes: Recall the three principles. What does each mean to us at a personal level?

i) *Relationship above other interest - We are to think beyond self ; "to deny ourselves and take up His cross" when we become His disciples. Making sacrifices and being magnanimous.*

ii) *Decide by faith and not by sight - We choose to face the consequences with God on our side regardless of outcomes which are often according to our own understanding. It means learning to let go of control.*

iii) *Leave the rest to God – We continue to trust God for His sovereign will and believe in the outworking of*

His goodness over all circumstances. Learning to submit to God.

2. a. **Being the uncle, Abraham had every right to choose which side of the land he wanted to but he did not. People might think he was being foolish. What can we learn about Abraham's decision?** [10 mins]

b. What is a notable decision you have made which impacted the family and others might not have agreed with it though you believed and acted according to the principles of God? [10 mins]

Leader's notes: 2a. A relate question. Consider what might be going through Abraham's mind for him to give up his 'right' as an older relative even as a family elder and yet, to let his nephew have the 'right to choose' instead. What does this act of Abraham tells you about his relationship with Lot (Genesis 18:16-33); about the way he handled conflict; about his character? When you read Genesis 18:16-33, it is obvious that Abraham care a lot about Lot. Their relationship matters to him. He loved his errant nephew and even pleaded before God Almighty to spare Lot's life. Abraham had put the relationship above his fears of the unknown, above his 'entitlement' and his prosperity; and in so doing, he had indirectly made a choice to trust God (Genesis 12:1-9) – to put faith above what he thought would become, that is what he could only see. This in turn gained him the pleasure of God. A higher principle - LOVE (bears, believes, hopes, endures all things) should reign in our lives.

Leader's notes: 2b. When our values are challenged, do we close an eye to what matters to God and stifle conviction that the Holy Spirit has put in us? The world is watching us and our decisions are important to God. What does it take to stand up in allegiance to Jesus and at the same time show the love of God to others? We are accountable for every decision and action we take.

3. **Lot was as prosperous as Abraham but he lost almost everything towards the end. What might be the areas in our lives where we pitched our tent at the wrong places? How have you experienced God's mercy even when you had chosen a wrong place to pitch your tent?** [10 mins]

Leader's notes: A reflect question. Lot was not a perfect man and his choice or decision led to dire consequences. This is what happens when we pitch our tent in the wrong place and soon, we start to compromise with God's instructions in order to cope with the consequences. Some examples can be i) choice of relationship (being 'unequally yoked' or illegitimate); ii) having dubious areas of interest; iii) choice of job/ career which contradict our faith beliefs; iv) long term overseas posting – being away from spouse or family. It is never too late – even when we have made not-so-good decision; we now seek counsel and repent. May God restore us with wisdom, courage & help us to navigate the rest of the journey. Our mistakes or wrong decision need not have the final say! God can help us through the circumstances if you are willing to humble yourself before Him and choose to walk in His ways.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. We will always choose to place relationship amongst family members as a priority above other interest & make decision by faith & not by sight.

Announcements

1. MARRIAGE PREPARATION COURSE

Sundays 18 & 25 Sep, 2, 9, 16 & 23 Oct | 1.45–5pm \$230 Per Couple | Classrooms 214/215

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 11 Sep.

2. WATER BAPTISM CLASS | Sat, 1 Oct | 9.30am-3.30pm | Classrooms 214 & 215

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 25 Sep. For enquiries, please contact Clara Tan at 65114160 or email her at claratan@riverlife.org.sg (Baptism Service will be on Sun, 13 Nov)

3. BRIDGING 1-2-3 WORKSHOP | Sat, 1 Oct | 2.30-5.30pm | Victory Chapel

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 25 Sep. For enquiries, please contact Jacqueline Cheng at jacquelinecheng@riverlife.org.sg or 65114118.

4. CHILD DEDICATION

The child dedication ceremony will be held during service on Sun, 9 Oct at 9am and 11.30am. There are slots for up to 50 families for each service.

Please register for one session only:

• Sat, 17 Sep | 2-4pm | Rooms 214 & 215 OR • Sun, 2 Oct | 2-4pm | Grace Chapel

Both parents are required to attend the class. Cost: \$20 (includes course materials and refreshment)

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 25 Sep. For enquiries, please contact Christine Tan at christinetan@riverlife.org.sg or 65114141

5. PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT (PUP) is an in-depth inductive bible study that requires five hours of homework weekly. This pilot run is opened only to those who have attended Precept Bible Study.

1. A Study On Malachi: Revering The Lord, Standing In Awe Of His Name

Orientation: Sun, 16 Oct | 2.30-4pm | Victory Chapel

Classes: Tue, 1, 8 & 15 Nov | 8-10pm | Victory Chapel

Course Material: \$10 (Register at the Cell Connection Counter by Sun, 25 Sep)