

Faith Takes the Path the Eyes Cannot See

Genesis 13-14:24

Teacher Guide

Introduction: When the High Road Looks Like the Low Road

In 2017, several major NCAA basketball programs were exposed in a federal investigation for illegal recruiting practices. High-profile coaches had offered money and benefits to secure top recruits. For years, these programs seemed untouchable. They won games, signed five-star athletes, filled arenas, and were praised as national powerhouses. But when the truth came to light, everything collapsed. Coaches were fired, wins were vacated, scholarships were lost, and reputations were shattered. What looked like success was nothing more than compromise dressed in bright colors.

Meanwhile, other programs that had refused to play by those rules did not rise as fast or sign the flashiest athletes. They looked like they were choosing the smaller path. But when the scandal broke, their integrity protected them. The high road may not look impressive at first, but in the end, it stands.

Genesis 13 and 14 open with a similar contrast. Abram has just returned from Egypt humbled by his failure. He goes back to the altar where he last met with God and calls on Him again. Almost immediately, conflict rises between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. The land cannot support both households. A choice must be made.

Abram could have insisted on his rights. He was older. He was the covenant bearer. The land belonged to him by promise. But instead of seizing advantage, Abram takes the high road. He gives Lot first choice. Lot lifts his eyes, sees the Jordan Valley, and chooses what appears prosperous. He chooses by sight. Abram chooses by faith.

That decision becomes the dividing line of the story. Genesis 13 draws a sharp contrast in character between Abram and Lot. Lot chooses what looks good to the eyes, while Abram rests in the promise of God. Then Genesis 14 reveals the outcome of those choices. The land Lot trusted collapses into regional conflict, and he becomes entangled in the

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

consequences of the place he chose. Abram, on the other hand, walks in courage, blessing, and divine favor.

The narrative is not simply about geography or grazing rights. It is about how the people of God make decisions. It is about choosing faith over appearances and trusting God’s promise instead of grasping for advantage. It shows how God vindicates those who walk His path even when that path looks smaller at first. These chapters teach a foundational truth about biblical faith. True blessing does not come from taking the best land. True blessing comes from trusting the God who gives the land.

Opening Question

Can you remember a time when you had to let go of something that looked good in order to obey God or honor someone else?

Possible Answers:

- Choosing character over convenience
- Turning down an opportunity that conflicted with faith
- Giving someone else priority when you wanted the advantage
- Trusting God with finances, relationships, or reputation

I. Abram Returns, Repents, and Rests in God’s Promise (13:1–9)

What’s Going On Here?

1) Restoration Begins Where Worship Begins (vv. 1–4)

Abram returns to Canaan “to the place where his tent had been at the beginning,” and this detail matters. His journey back from Egypt is not simply geographical. It is spiritual. Egypt symbolized compromise and self-protection. Canaan symbolizes promise and obedience. Abram retraces his steps deliberately until he reaches the altar he built earlier. He returns to the last place where he walked closely with God. This is the biblical pattern of restoration. When God restores His people, He often brings them back to where they last trusted Him.

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

The text says Abram “called upon the name of the Lord.” This phrase is covenant language. It marks a renewal of relationship and dependence. It appears in Genesis 4:26 when people first worshiped publicly, in Genesis 12:8 when Abram first entered the land, and later becomes the foundation of salvation in Joel 2:32 and Romans 10:13. Abram’s failure in Egypt did not disqualify him. God did not abandon him. Instead, He drew Abram back into worship. Restoration does not begin with self-improvement. It begins with surrender. It begins with acknowledging God again. Abram begins anew, not by building something for himself, but by calling on the God who rescues and restores.

2) Conflict Arises Even Among the Blessed (vv. 5–6)

Abram and Lot both prosper, but prosperity brings pressure. The Hebrew text implies that the land was being “strained” or “burdened” by the size of their flocks and households. Blessings that were good in themselves now create tension between them. This shows a profound truth about life in a fallen world. Blessing does not remove conflict. Sometimes abundance produces as much stress as scarcity. More sheep means more grazing land is needed. More servants means more responsibility and more opportunity for friction.

Genesis mentions that “the Canaanites and Perizzites were dwelling in the land.” This is more than background information. It reminds the reader that Abram and Lot are surrounded by other nations. Their conflict gives an unbelieving world an opportunity to question their witness. God’s people are called to unity not only for their sake but for the sake of His name among the nations. Prosperity creates a test. Will Abram and Lot fight for their own interests or trust God enough to honor one another?

3) Abram Chooses Peace Over Pride (vv. 7–9)

Strife breaks out between the herdsmen, and Abram responds with remarkable humility. Though he is older, wealthier, and the recipient of God’s covenant promise, he refuses to let pride dictate the moment. He approaches Lot and offers a peaceful solution. “Let there be no strife between you and me.” Abram could claim first rights to the land by culture and by covenant. Instead, he gives Lot the first choice. This is not passivity. It is deliberate faith. Abram can release what looks valuable because he trusts in the God who gave the land and will fulfill His promise regardless of what Lot chooses.

Abram’s response reflects the heart of God. The apostle Paul later writes, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18). Jesus teaches His followers to be peacemakers, for they reveal the character of their Father. Abraham models this posture centuries earlier. He does not fight for control. He does not grasp for

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

advantage. His confidence in God frees him to take the humble path. Abram demonstrates that peacekeeping is not a sign of weakness. It is evidence of trust in a sovereign God. Because Abram trusts the promise, he can hold the land with an open hand.

Discussion Question

What does Lot’s choice teach us about the dangers of trusting appearances, and what does Abram’s response teach us about trusting God’s promises?

Possible Answers:

- Not everything that looks desirable is godly
- Decisions made by sight alone often lead away from God
- Faith waits for what God gives rather than grabbing what looks good
- Worship reorients our hearts to God’s purposes

II. Lot Chooses by Sight; Abram Receives by Promise (13:10–18)

What’s Going On Here?

1) Lot Chooses What His Eyes Desire (vv. 10–11)

The narrator is intentional when he says Lot “lifted up his eyes.” This phrase appears often in Genesis, and it frequently signals a turn toward either faith or temptation. In Lot’s case, it signals the latter. He sees the well-watered Jordan Valley and immediately desires it. The description links the valley to “the garden of the Lord,” which is Eden language. But the reference is ironic. Eden was a place of innocence and obedience. The Jordan Valley includes Sodom, a place of wickedness and rebellion. The land looks like paradise, but it is planted with danger.

Lot chooses based on appearance alone. This echoes Genesis 3. Eve “saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes.” Sight becomes the gateway to sin. Sight becomes the substitute for discernment. This is the danger of evaluating life purely by what seems beneficial in the moment. Lot does not pray. He does not consult Abram. He does not consider the moral climate of the cities nearby. He sees something that promises prosperity and moves toward it. The pattern is clear. Canaan represents promise. The Jordan Valley represents

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

compromise. Lot chooses the path of self-interest rather than the path of covenant faithfulness.

2) Lot Settles Near Sodom: Proximity Shapes Destiny (vv. 12–13)

The placement of Lot’s tent is theologically charged. At first, he pitches his tent “near” Sodom. Later, we find him living “in” Sodom. Eventually, he sits “in the gate” of Sodom, a position of civic leadership. This progression shows that proximity to sin often becomes participation in sin. Lot did not intend to join Sodom’s culture. He simply moved near it because it was convenient. Yet the narrator warns us that Sodom’s people were “wicked” and “sinners exceedingly.” Their sin was not hidden. Lot moved into a polluted environment thinking it would not affect him. But Scripture consistently teaches that the company we keep shapes the condition of our hearts. Proximity influences choices, values, and identity. Lot stepped toward ease and comfort, but he also stepped toward danger and corruption.

3) God Calls Abram to Lift His Eyes in Faith (vv. 14–17)

After Lot departs, God speaks. This pattern is important. Divine revelation comes after Abram chooses humility. God tells Abram, “Lift up your eyes.” Lot lifted his eyes to choose what looked good. Abram lifts his eyes at God’s command to receive what is truly good. The difference is not merely who looks where. The difference is who directs the gaze. Abram looks where God tells him to look. God now expands Abram’s vision far beyond what Lot claimed. North, south, east, west—everything Abram surrendered is now promised to him by divine decree. God reaffirms that this land will belong to Abram’s descendants forever. God alone turns loss into inheritance.

God also tells Abram to walk the land’s length and breadth. This was a symbolic act of possession in the ancient world, much like planting a flag or signing a deed. Abram’s walk is not a step of ambition but a step of obedience. The land is his not because he seized it, but because God has given it. Human strategy leads to immediate gain but long-term loss. Divine promise leads to immediate sacrifice but eternal blessing.

4) Abram Builds Another Altar: Faith Always Ends in Worship (v. 18)

Abram settles in Hebron and builds another altar. This altar joins the others Abram has built across Canaan. They form a map of worship, marking the journey of a man who trusts God’s unfolding plan. Abram does not build towers like Babel. He builds altars. Altars signify dependence, gratitude, surrender, and covenant relationship. Abram’s worship acknowledges two great truths: the land is God’s to give, and the future is God’s to fulfill.

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

By building an altar, Abram is declaring that he trusts God's promise more than human sight, human strategy, or human security. Faith releases control and responds in worship.

Discussion Question

What does Lot's choice teach us about the dangers of trusting appearances, and what does Abram's response teach us about trusting God's promises?

Possible Answers:

- Not everything that looks desirable is godly
- Decisions made by sight alone often lead away from God
- Faith waits for what God gives rather than grabbing what looks good
- Worship reorients our hearts to God's purposes

III. Abram Acts in Courage, Faith, and Dependence on God (14:1–24)

What's Going On Here?

1) The World of Nations Is Chaotic, but God Protects His People (vv. 1–12)

Genesis 14 opens with the first recorded war narrative in Scripture. Four eastern kings, led by Chedorlaomer of Elam, wage war against five Canaanite kings, including the king of Sodom. The political world around Abram is violent and unstable. Kings rise and fall. Alliances shift. Armies invade. The land Lot chose for prosperity collapses into conflict. The valley that looked like Eden now becomes a battlefield.

Lot is swept up in the chaos and taken captive. His captivity is not random. It is the natural consequence of choosing by sight rather than by faith. The narrator emphasizes this by reminding us again that Lot was living in Sodom. The danger of Lot's choice is now fully exposed. His hope for security turns into the loss of his freedom.

Yet the chaos of nations does not thwart the purposes of God. The covenant God made with Abram in Genesis 12 still stands. God's promise to bless Abram and protect his offspring does not depend on political stability or favorable circumstances. The turmoil of Genesis 14 reminds us that the world is unpredictable, but God's covenant care is certain. Lot is captured because of where he chose to live, but Abram is stirred to action because

of who God called him to be. Even amid international conflict, God watches over His own and moves His servant toward rescue.

2) Abram Acts with Courage and Covenant Loyalty (vv. 13–16)

When Abram hears of Lot’s capture, he immediately responds. He gathers 318 trained men born in his household. This detail reveals that Abram was not a wandering nomad with only a tent and a staff. He was a well-established patriarch with a disciplined household. Even so, 318 men are no match for four victorious kings. Abram is outnumbered and outpowered. Yet he steps forward in faith.

Abram’s courage is grounded not in military capacity but in covenant loyalty. Lot had chosen his own path, yet Abram still risks his life to rescue him. This reflects the heart of God, who rescues His people even when they wander. Abram’s daring attack—conducted by night and followed by pursuit far north into Dan and beyond—demonstrates strategic wisdom and remarkable bravery. The victory cannot be explained by human strength. God grants success to the covenant-bearer.

This episode foreshadows future moments in Israel’s history when God delivers His people against impossible odds. Gideon defeats Midian with three hundred men. Jonathan and his armor-bearer rout Philistine troops. David conquers Goliath with a sling. In each case, God proves Himself mighty in the weakness of His servants. Abram’s courage reveals that faith does not wait for favorable circumstances. Faith obeys and trusts God with the outcome.

3) Melchizedek Blesses Abram: A Glimpse of Christ’s Priesthood (vv. 17–20)

As Abram returns from battle, two kings come out to meet him. These kings could not be more different. The king of Sodom represents corruption, greed, and wickedness. Melchizedek, king of Salem, represents righteousness, peace, and the worship of God Most High.

Melchizedek’s appearance is sudden. He enters the story without genealogy, without introduction, and without conclusion. He is both king and priest, a rare combination in the Old Testament. He blesses Abram, attributing victory to God Most High, “possessor of heaven and earth.” Abram responds with a tithe, acknowledging Melchizedek’s spiritual authority.

This brief encounter becomes the foundation for one of the most important theological themes in Scripture. Psalm 110 identifies the coming Messiah as “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.” Hebrews 7 reveals that Jesus fulfills this priesthood, combining

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

kingly authority with priestly intercession. Melchizedek blesses Abram in Genesis 14, but Christ blesses His people eternally. Abram's story reaches beyond himself and points forward to Jesus, the true Priest-King who defeats the enemies of God's people and brings lasting peace.

4) Abram Refuses the King of Sodom's Offer: Faith Rejects Worldly Reward (vv. 21–24)

The king of Sodom approaches Abram with an offer. He suggests that Abram keep the spoils of war while he takes the people. This may sound generous, but it is a subtle attempt to tie Abram's future prosperity to Sodom's name. If Abram accepts, Sodom can claim a role in his success.

Abram refuses. He has lifted his hand in oath to the Lord, swearing that he will not allow anyone to say, "I have made Abram rich." Abram wants his blessing to come from God alone. He will not be indebted to wickedness. He will not bind his future to the king of Sodom. His refusal stands in direct contrast to Lot's earlier decision. Lot chose Sodom. Abram rejects it. Lot seeks security in the city that will one day burn. Abram seeks security in the God who keeps covenant.

This moment demonstrates the purity of Abram's faith. He will trust the Lord for provision. He will not compromise for advantage. He will not negotiate with wickedness to secure his future. His integrity closes the door to temptation and preserves the holiness of the covenant line.

Discussion Question

How does Abram's courage, his encounter with Melchizedek, and his refusal of Sodom's offer together model what it means to live by faith in a world filled with temptation and chaos?

Possible Answers:

- Faith acts in courage because God is our strength
- Faith recognizes God's blessing instead of seeking worldly reward
- Faith rejects opportunities that would compromise integrity
- Abram trusted God to provide, protect, and direct

Living Out God's Grace Today

A. Return to Worship When You Lose Your Way.

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

Abram returned to worship after failing God in Egypt. He did not try to press forward without repentance, nor did he pretend nothing happened. He went back to the altar where he last met with God. Scripture repeatedly shows that genuine restoration always begins with returning to God's presence. Israel rebuilt the altar before rebuilding the city after exile. David worshiped after confessing his sin with Bathsheba. Peter's restoration began when Christ met him and re-commissioned him. When believers drift or stumble, the first step is always worship. It is in worship that we remember who God is and who we are in Him. It is in worship that grace softens the heart and reset happens. Abram teaches us to start again at the feet of the Lord, where mercy meets repentance and strength is renewed.

B. Make Decisions by Faith, Not by Sight.

Lot lifted his eyes and saw land that looked prosperous. Abram lifted his eyes only when God told him to. Decisions driven by sight alone often lead into trouble. Scripture warns that "there is a way that seems right to a man," but it leads to destruction. Adam and Eve saw the fruit and desired it. Samson saw a Philistine woman and demanded her. Israel saw the nations around them and wanted a king like them. Sight without discernment is spiritually dangerous. Abram shows us that faith looks deeper than appearances. Faith asks what honors God, not what looks easiest. Faith considers long-term spiritual consequences, not short-term gain. Faith waits for God's direction rather than rushing toward what looks appealing. The blessing of God rests on those who walk by faith, not on those who grab what their eyes desire.

C. Reject the Temptation to Cling to Security.

Abram released the best-looking land because he trusted God to fulfill His promise. He did not cling to what appeared to secure his future. He held the land with an open hand because his confidence rested in the God who owns it. Faith relinquishes control. Faith lets go of the illusion that we can secure our own future. Faith believes that obedience is safer than self-protection. Throughout Scripture, those who cling to earthly security lose far more than they gain. Saul held onto the throne and lost everything. The rich young ruler held onto wealth and missed eternal life. But Abraham, by releasing what seemed best, received what God declared good. The safest place to stand will always be in the will of God.

D. Resist the Allure of the World's Rewards.

Abram refused the king of Sodom's offer because he wanted his story tied to God's faithfulness, not to human generosity or corruption. He recognized that accepting Sodom's

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**

riches would bind him to a wicked city and dilute the glory of God's blessing. Scripture teaches that the rewards the world offers often come with hidden strings. Esau traded a birthright for a bowl of stew. Judas traded his soul for thirty pieces of silver. Demas forsook Paul because he loved this present world. Abram's refusal stands in contrast to these choices. Faith seeks a reward from God, not from the world. Faith treasures God's approval above the applause of people. Faith is content with what God provides and refuses to compromise to gain more.

E. Live as People Shaped by Christ's Priesthood.

Melchizedek steps into the story as king of Salem and priest of God Most High. His blessing reveals God's hand in Abram's victory, and Abram responds by honoring the priest-king God placed before him. This moment points forward to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, who is both our eternal King and our compassionate Priest. Hebrews teaches that Jesus intercedes for His people, blesses them with righteousness, and secures their victory. To live under Christ's priesthood means to live in confidence, not fear. It means to rest in His intercession when we are weak. It means to draw near to His throne of grace when life presses hard. It means to trust His authority over every battle and His blessing over every step. Abram's encounter with Melchizedek teaches us to build our identity not on our own strength, but on the priestly work of Christ who reigns over us and intercedes for us.

Conclusion: Faith Walks Where God Leads

Genesis 13 and 14 show us two very different paths. Lot chooses by sight. Abram chooses by promise. Lot seeks advantage. Abram seeks peace. Lot clings to the land. Abram clings to God. Lot is swept away by the world he trusted. Abram rescues him and walks in blessing. God honors faith that follows His word, trusts His promises, releases control, and rejects worldly reward. The God who led Abram leads His people still.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for the wisdom of Your word and the example of Abram's faith. Teach us to trust Your promises when choices are difficult, to seek peace over pride, and to rely on Your strength when the world feels unstable. Guard us from the temptation to build our lives by sight. Help us walk in obedience, worship You with sincerity, and rest in the blessing that comes from Your hand alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Apr 13 – **Apr 19, 2026**