

Families in Conflict

Genesis 13:5-13

INTRODUCTION

- A. Many families are in conflict.
 - 1. The Smith's are in conflict due to Ralph's adultery; Mary doesn't know if she'll ever trust him again.
 - 2. The Long's are in conflict due to financial woes.
 - a. Jimmy participated in a risky investment which collapsed.
 - b. Margaret doesn't know how they'll feed the children.
 - 3. The Cartwright's are in conflict because of their 17-year-old.
 - a. Rob is asserting his independence.
 - 1) He habitually comes in well after his 10 o'clock curfew.
 - 2) His mother regularly smells alcohol on his breath.
 - b. Doug and Anne aren't sure what they should do.
- C. Your family may be in a conflict which isn't as serious as what I just described.
 - 1. You and your spouse might just have a minor argument now and then.
 - 2. You and your children may not see eye to eye on any number of things.
- D. This morning, we want to examine a conflict between Abram and his nephew Lot and see what lessons we learn.
- E. Abram and Lot got into trouble because of their wealth.
 - 1. Both men were fairly wealthy.
 - a. Abram is described as being "very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold" (13:2).
 - b. Lot had flocks and herds (13:5)--a sign of wealth in those days.
 - 2. The land where they were living could not support both men.
 - a. Their flocks were so great that there wasn't enough space for the flocks to graze.
 - b. Because of the shortage of pasture, Abram's and Lot's herdsmen were beginning to fight.
- F. Family conflict occurs when someone disobeys God.
 - 1. God had told Abram, "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house" (12:1).
 - 2. Abram was to leave his homeland and his family.
 - a. However, Abram took along Lot, his nephew (12:5)--in taking Lot with him, Abram did not leave his family like God told him to do.
 - b. Only because Abram took Lot did they run into problems--Had Abram originally done what God instructed, strife would never have arisen between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen.
 - 3. Today families run into trouble because someone disobeys God.
 - a. Perhaps adultery ruins a family.
 - b. Perhaps failing to honor one's parents brings heartache.
 - c. Perhaps one's inability to control his temper put everyone on egg shells.
 - 4. There has never been a divorce where there wasn't sin on one side or the other.
- G. Let's see how to manage family conflict.

RECOGNIZE THE PROBLEM, vv. 7-8

- A. Abram recognized the problem.

1. There was strife between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen, v. 7.
2. Abram then went to Lot to work things out.
- B. Abram could have pretended there wasn't a real problem.
 1. Many families do just that.
 - a. Both partners know the marriage is not what it should be, but neither partner speaks a word about the problem.
 - b. An adult child seldom visits his mother, but at Christmas and birthdays both exchange gifts and act as though nothing is wrong.
 2. Do you have problems in your family that you're ignoring?
- C. Abram went to Lot with the problem.
 1. Abram could have gone Sara and told her all about this problem.
 2. We need to go to the person causing the problem; if we don't we are likely to cause even more problems.
 3. Scripture admonishes us not to air disagreements in the open.
 - a. "A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter" (Prov. 11:13).
 - b. "He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends" (Prov. 17:9).
 - 1) To cover a transgression means to keep the wrong private.
 - 2) The one who repeats a private matter runs the risk of making things worse.
 - c. In dealing with problems in the church, Jesus told us to go to our offender alone first (Mt. 18:15). If the matter can't be solved, only then are we to involve others.
- D. If you are having family difficulties, go to the one causing the problem.

RECOGNIZE THAT YOU'RE FAMILY, v. 8

- A. Abram wanted to solve the problem with Lot, because they were family--He goes to Lot and tells him, "We are brethren," v. 8.
- B. Although things become difficult in families, we need to remember that we are still family.
 1. Regardless of what your child may do, you are still family.
 2. Regardless of how domineering your mother is, she is still your mother.
 3. Regardless of how many times you tell your husband to pick up his underwear out of the floor, he is still your husband.
- C. Love is to permeate families.
 1. Scripture reminds Christians that we are to be a people of love.
 - a. "Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us" (Eph. 5:2).
 - 1) The love Jesus gave us was a sacrificial love--he put others before himself
 - 2) We as Christians are to show that kind of love.
 - b. "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Col. 3:14).
 - c. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1 Jn. 4:7).
 2. Families should be built around love.
 - a. Husbands are to love their wives the way Jesus loved the church (Eph. 5:25).
 - 1) Jesus loved the church sacrificially--he died for the church.
 - 2) We husbands must love our wives sacrificially.
 - b. Wives are told to respect their husbands (Eph. 5:33).
 - 1) Surely, proper respect includes love.
 - 2) The older women are to admonish the young women "to love their husbands," "to love their children" (Tit. 2:4).

- c. Children are to honor their parents (Eph. 6:2)--Surely honor includes love.
- 3. We show such love through our actions--Are you showing love in your family?

RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS A SOLUTION, v. 9

- A. Abram tells Lot to separate from him.
 - 1. If Lot went to the left, Abram would go to the right.
 - 2. If Lot went to the right, Abram would go to the left.
- B. A real solution was in sight.
 - 1. Abram formulated the solution and then he went to Lot.
 - a. When we have family difficulties, we should be willing to devise a real solution.
 - b. The solution may not be one we particularly like--Abram risked losing the land of Canaan God had promised him.
 - 2. The solution should be one which satisfies those involved.

RECOGNIZE YOUR FAMILY MEMBER AS GREATER THAN YOU, v. 9

- A. Abram allowed Lot to choose the land he wanted.
 - 1. Abram had every right to take whatever land he wanted.
 - a. Abram was the older of the two.
 - b. Abram cared for Lot when his father died.
 - 2. Yet, Abram gave up his right and allowed Lot to choose the land; he did not insist on his own way.
- B. In our families, we cannot insist on our own way.
 - 1. Love "does not seek its own" (1 Cor. 13:5).
 - 2. An elder cannot be "self-willed" (Tit. 1:7).
- C. We must humbly place our family members above ourselves.
 - 1. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phil. 2:3).
 - 2. Illustration of boy giving blood, Illustrations Unlimited, p. 328, #26.
 - a. That boy put the needs of his sister above those of himself.
 - b. Are you putting the needs of your family members before your own needs?

CONCLUSION

- A. Families are terribly important; therefore, we must make every effort to keep conflict out of our families.
- B. However, though families are important, some things are more important than family.
 - 1. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:26).
 - 2. Our obedience to God is more important than our family.
 - a. Yet, the paradox is that as we put God first in our lives, our families become stronger, more secure.
 - b. Are you putting God first in your life?