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Fall 2024
Navigating Family Conflict

Sermon Title Possibilities: Actively Surrendering

To be used with Session 2: Abram and Lot: Family Rights

Scripture: Matthew 23:8-13

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “Abram and Lot: Family Rights,” this sermon connects today’s group study by expounding upon the commands of Christ to put others first. Abram put Lot ahead of himself by allowing Lot to choose which land to graze his flocks upon. Jesus called His followers to put others ahead of self by being servants.

Introduction: Parents truly know best. If we are parents or grandparents, we know this statement to be true. While parents and grandparents may not always make the best decisions, we know that we love our children and grandchildren and want what is best for them. We also know that it is in the best interest for our kids to follow our lead.

If this can be said about us as parents and grandparents, how much more can it be said of our heavenly Father? One distinct difference between us and Him is that He always makes the best decisions, and we would be wise to follow His lead. Today’s message is one in which God leaves no doubt. We are to not get caught up in titles and prestige. Instead, we are to actively surrender in putting others ahead of ourselves. We learned this in today’s group study in that Abram put Lot’s needs ahead of his own. We too are called to put others ahead of self.

1. I am called to surrender my title (Matt. 23: 8-10).

It is important to understand the context of this passage so that we can better understand what Jesus is teaching. Jesus spoke these words the week in which He was crucified for the sins of the world. The crowds and his disciples were his primary audience, but the scribes and Pharisees were present (v. 1-2). The scribes and Pharisees were the religious elite of their time. They would seek to parade themselves everywhere they went in an effort to artificially inflate themselves in front of others. Their desire would be to set themselves apart based on title, status, knowledge, or whatever means possible. Yet, Jesus clearly articulated that we should not distinguish ourselves based upon any self-appointed titles.

Most leadership experts will say that leading via one’s title is the lowest form of leadership. If someone has to constantly be reminded of his or her title, that person may not be much of a leader. Jesus told His disciples and the crowd not to concern themselves with various titles. He concluded this section by indicating that we have one instructor who is the Messiah. The word Messiah means the anointed one, the one who saves. This is the

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greatest title, and it does not belong to us. Instead of worrying about what others should call us, let's point people to the Messiah because He is the One who can save.

2. I am called to surrender my status (Matt. 23:11).

One of the ways the Pharisees sought to distinguish themselves was to "enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels" (v. 5). Phylacteries and tassels were additions to their clothing. The larger the phylacteries and the longer the tassels the more important others would assume them to be. The greater the importance, the more others would seek to serve them, and the Pharisees wanted this to take place.

Yet, Jesus taught that greatness comes in being a servant. It is important to point out that Jesus was not asking His followers to do something He was unwilling to do. Paul articulated this truth to the church at Philippi when he said Christ "emptied Himself by assuming the form of a servant.... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death" (Phil. 2:7-8). Since Jesus emptied and humbled Himself, we should follow His lead. This can take on various forms. For some it may mean making sure our spouse's needs are met before our own. For others, it may mean giving up our pew for a guest and finding an active place to serve either inside or outside the church. For all of us, it means thinking of others first.

3. I am called to surrender myself (Matt. 23:12).

Let's start this last point with a new word: oxymoron. An oxymoron are two words when put together contradict each other. For example, jumbo shrimp or fun run. The two words simply contradict each other. Another example is proud Christian. Sure, we can be proud about our faith in Jesus Christ. But when we come to fully understand that there is no one righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10), we cannot help but come to God in a spirit of humility.

Our final act of surrender, based on this passage, is to humble ourselves. This is not something that our spouse can do for us or something that we can do for our children. Instead, it is a personal act based on a personal choice. If we come to Jesus in humble surrender, He said that we will be exalted. This does not mean we will get a promotion or win the grand prize at the next drawing. These things are temporary. It does mean that we will have to place our faith in Him and His Word because the exaltation, while not defined, is promised. Jesus said that the humbled *will be exalted* (emphases added).

Conclusion: Surrender is a hard thing for many of us to do. When I started this message, I acknowledged that parents and grandparents know what is best. I also acknowledged that God even knows more than parents and grandparents. In the same way that we want our kids and grandkids to follow us, our heavenly Father wants us to follow Him. It all begins when we surrender our heart to Him and continually surrender our titles and status.

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