

# God, the Possessor of All



## Topic

Affection and attention

## Theme

God, the Possessor of all, is worthy of our affection and attention.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider his worldview in light of God being the Possessor of all.

## Materials

- Resources 1 and 8
- Visual 2 from resource CD
- Digital camera (optional)

## Scripture Focus

Genesis 13; 14

## Summary

God's possession of all was emphasized as Abram interacted with his selfish nephew Lot, the mysterious character Melchizedek, and the king of Sodom. Providential encounters and Abram's response to them demonstrate that Abram understood that God is Possessor of all. Abram demonstrated confidence in God by refusing what was rightfully his from a human perspective. He allowed Lot to choose what land he wanted. Abram also declined his share of the war spoils.

## Outline

### I. Abram Separates from Lot (13)

- Lot looks to get it all (13:1–13)
- Abram sacrifices to God (13:14–18)

### II. Abram Rescues Lot (14)

- Lot loses it all (14:1–16)
- Abram recognizes God as Possessor of all (14:17–24)

## Memory Verse

*"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth"*  
(Genesis 14:19).

## GETTING STARTED

### Best Wide-Eyed-Face Contest

Challenge several learners in your class to come to the front of the class and make the best wide-eyed, excited faces they can. If you have a digital camera, take pictures of their wide-eyed moments and project them for the class to review. Have the learners vote for the best wide-eyed expression. Give the winner a small trinket as a prize.

In our lesson for today, Lot has a wide-eyed moment like what our learners just modeled for us. He sees an opportunity for a big gain and jumps on it. Abram, on the other hand, has his eyes elsewhere. He helps us understand that God, the Possessor of all, is worthy of our affection and attention.

### Wide-Eyed Moment

**VISUAL:** Display visual 2 (from resource CD). It is a picture of a wide-eyed person.

**ASK:** What three things might cause you to make a face similar to this one? (Allow learners to think for a few minutes and then share their responses.)

**ASK:** When was the last time you had an excited, wide-eyed moment? (Q1)

**ASK:** When did your wide-eyed moment turn out to be not so good? (Q2)

In our lesson for today, Lot has a wide-eyed moment like the guy in the picture. He sees an opportunity and is sure it is one he will never regret. Abram, on the other hand, has his eyes focused elsewhere. He helps us understand that God, the Possessor of all, is worthy of our affection and attention.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Both accounts studied in this lesson share a notable feature: God did not enter the accounts as a character until nearly the end. This timing serves to highlight that Abram's decisions were based on what He knew about God. His growing understanding of God was changing his life.

### I. Abram Separates from Lot (13)

#### A. Lot looks to get it all (13:1–13)

Chapter 13 opens with a description of the wealth Abram gained while in Egypt (v. 2). The account then turns to Abram returning to the place between Ai and Bethel where he had built an altar to God (13:3). His return to this location builds anticipation that Abram will act similarly to his humble, obedient behavior when he first entered the land (12:4–9) instead of according to the self-driven choices he made in going to Egypt (12:10–20).



**READ:** Genesis 13:4. **ASK:** Describe the characteristics of a person who calls on God. (Q3) *He is dependent on God, humble before God, thankful to God, and focused on God.*

The description of Lot is noticeably different from the description of Abram (13:1). Lot is listed following the more closely connected description of Abram's wife and possessions. It is almost as if he is an afterthought. The repeated description of Lot as *with* Abram strengthens this disassociation (13:5). Lot, rather than being part of Abram's household, is now presented in a manner that more closely resembles a fortunate *hanger-on*. The fact that Lot also accumulated great possessions (13:5) points out that he was along for the ride and benefiting financially from Abram. This presentation of Lot hanging around Abram anticipates a conflict or crisis between the two relatives.

Although God promised the land to Abram (12:1–3), the promise had not yet been realized. Abram and Lot were living in a land possessed by others. The Canaanites in the land complicated the care of Abram's and Lot's growing contingent of people and livestock. The land could not sustain both men's possessions. This caused strife between the two men's herdsman as they jostled for the resources needed to support the animals in their care.

**READ:** Genesis 13:5–7. **ASK:** Given God's promises to Abram concerning the land, how might one expect Abram to respond to the conflict? (Q4) *Abram could have been very possessive of the land God had promised to him. He could have told Lot to get off his land and find another place for his family and herds.*

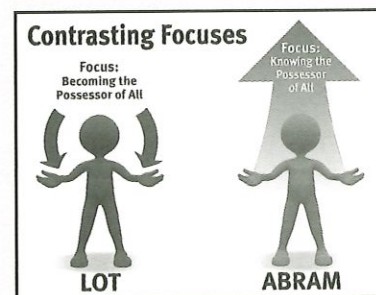
**BIBLE STUDY:** Organize your learners into two groups. Have each group read Genesis 13:8–12. The first group should determine Abram's view of material possessions based on his attitudes and actions. The second group should do the same for Lot. After three or four minutes, have each group report.

**ASK:** How did Abram's perspective on material gain differ from Lot's? (Q5) *Abram had the right to choose the best land. He surrendered that right to Lot and accepted Lot's selfish choice without protest or disappointment.*

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 8 to summarize the contrasting focuses of Abram and Lot.

Abram's behavior toward his nephew Lot was remarkable. Even though Lot had been dependent upon Abram for many years and received material blessings because of his connection with Abram, Abram treated Lot as an equal. Abram both humbled himself and elevated Lot in order to keep peace.

The land Lot eyed was compared to both the Garden of Eden and the land of Egypt. The Garden of Eden, while a paradise, was also the place where Adam and Eve faced and then gave into temptation (3:1–7). The Nile River in Egypt provided an ample water source and brought fruitfulness to the land. Yet it is where Abram went when he failed to trust God. So both locations were associated with temptation and sin.





Like Eden and Egypt, the plain of Jordan was associated with temptation too. Moses, the writer, inserted a reference to the yet-future destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah for the cities' wickedness (13:10). Moses also plainly stated that the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against God (13:13). Sodom was beautiful and fruitful but ripe with temptation. So Lot's choice was both selfish and unwise. He was focused on prosperity and indulgence, taking the opportunity to break away from Abram so he could take his life into his own hands. He wanted to become a possessor of many things and much wealth.

Abram's actions demonstrate that he understood God was the possessor of all and therefore he could hold his possessions loosely. Abram knew that God would work out the details of His promises. Abram pursued peace above perceived prosperity. Abram lived by faith; Lot lived by sight.

### **B. Abram sacrifices to God (13:14–18)**

With Lot temporarily out of the picture, God entered the scene again to communicate with Abram directly concerning His promises to him. God reaffirmed His promise to give Abram the land. He directed Abram to look all around, even in the direction of Lot's land choice (13:14). All Abram saw would one day belong to his descendants (13:15). And God promised that Abram's descendants would become so numerous they would be as uncountable as the dust of the earth (13:16).

God then directed Abram to walk the length and breadth of the land (13:17). This walking the land was not only to give Abram an awareness of the land promised to him, but was also part of Abram's legal acquisition of the land. Cultures contemporaneous to Abram utilized similar devices to symbolize the receipt of land or kingdoms. New kings or rulers were known to circle the walls of their capital cities or tour the boundaries of their kingdoms as they began their reigns.

God could give Abram the land because He owned the land. He owned the land because He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. God would make that point clear in the next set of scenes.

Abram moved his tent to Hebron, where he built an altar to the Lord (13:18).

**READ:** Genesis 13:18. **ASK:** Why would Abram build an altar to the Lord? (Q6) *To sacrifice something to God as a means of worshiping God. Abram wanted to give to God.*

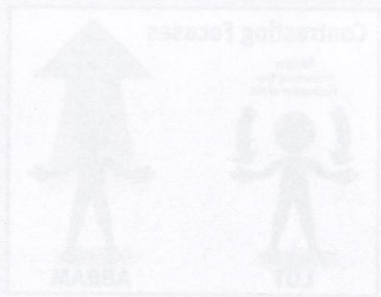
The account of the separation of Lot and Abram ends with Lot wide-eyed with opportunities to profit and indulge himself and with Abram building an altar to sacrifice to the Lord. Abram understood Who God is and acted accordingly. His string of good decisions, in light of Who God is, continued in the next dramatic account.

## **II. Abram Rescues Lot (14)**

Once again God's involvement in the Genesis account becomes providential and behind the scenes. This intentional omission of referring to God's activity sets the stage for showing Abram's growing understanding of God's possession of all.

### **A. Lot loses it all (14:1–16)**

Four kings from areas in modern Iran (Elam) and Iraq (Shinar) put the people





of the Jordanian plain and southern Dead Sea area, including Sodom and Gomorrah, under tribute (14:1, 2). After thirteen years, those under tribute rebelled (14:3, 4). This triggered a war as the four kings of the east, led by king Chedorlaomer of Elam, invaded and defeated the people who lived east of the Dead Sea as well as those as far south as El Paran (14:5–7). The armies then turned back north to attack the Amalekites in Kadesh Barnea before continuing northeast to address the rebellious kings who lived just south of the Dead Sea (presumably where Sodom and Gomorrah were located). The roundabout path the kings of the east took was probably to ensure that no one would attack them from the rear as they headed to address the rebelling kings. The kings of the east were victorious over the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding areas. They plundered the cities and took Lot and all his goods with them to Dan, which is north of what is now the Sea of Galilee and about 160 miles from Sodom. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah managed to escape (14:8–12).

**READ:** Genesis 14:13. **ASK:** How might an observer expect Abram to respond to the capture of Lot considering Lot selfishly chose the well-watered land and then unwisely moved into the wicked city of Sodom? (Q7) *An observer would expect Abram to stay put and not take the risk of pursuing the powerful enemy kings. The risk was arguably too great to rescue someone who acted so selfishly and unwisely.*

After hearing of his nephew's capture from a providential encounter with an escapee, Abram quickly took up arms. He mustered 318 of his most loyal associates and pursued the enemy as far as Dan (14:14). The size of his army was no doubt dwarfed by the coalition he pursued. But God was on Abram's side; he could not lose. Abram attacked the invading armies at night from two different fronts (14:15). His men successfully defeated the kings of the east, pursuing them north beyond Damascus. Abram freed Lot and recovered his goods as well as the goods belonging to the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (14:16).

**ASK:** What do you think Lot said to Abram when Abram showed up to set him free? (Q8)

**ASK:** Do you think Lot learned any lessons from this scary experience? **Explain.** (Q9) *Most likely not. Lot went back to Sodom and became even more entrenched in that vile city.*

It is worth noting that the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah didn't lift a finger to help Lot. They initially fled the battle and then decided to stay home while Abram embarked on the dangerous 125-mile rescue mission. One would think that would cause Lot to realize the lack of loyalty the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah had toward him and the deep affection Abram had for him.

## **B. Abram recognizes God as Possessor of all (14:17–24)**

As Abram returned from defeating the kings of the east, he was met by the king of Sodom and the mysterious king of Salem, Melchizedek. There were several

Melchizedek's birth and death are not recorded in Scripture. This is unusual in Genesis, for the book records every major character's birth and death. This unique presentation caused David (Ps. 110) and the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 7) to theologically reflect on the significance of Melchizedek. While important to the overall arc of Scripture, these reflections are beyond the scope of this lesson.

Salems in that day. It is possible, even likely, that Melchizedek was king of Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 76:2). Perhaps the name *Jerusalem* was shortened to emphasize the idea of peace (*shalom* transliterated *Salem*). Melchizedek greeted Abram with a meal. Melchizedek is described as a priest of God Most High (14:18). This is the first reference to priests in the Bible.

**READ:** Genesis 14:17–24. **ASK:** What descriptions of God are repeated in these verses? (Q10) *God Most High and Possessor of heaven and earth.*

**ASK:** What did Melchizedek reveal about God through his blessing of Abram? (Q11) *God owns everything. God was the One Who providentially brought about Abram's victory.*

**ASK:** How did Abram respond to Melchizedek's blessing? (Q12) *Abram gave a 10 percent offering of the plunder to God through Melchizedek.*

Abram's actions demonstrated that he understood Melchizedek to be a legitimate representative of God. The giving of a tithe to Melchizedek was a way for Abram to give God credit for God's providential work in securing victory. Rather than taking credit for himself, Abram rightly gave credit to God, the Possessor of all.

Perhaps embarrassed by Abram's courageous willingness to pursue and fight the kings of the East, the king of Sodom made Abram a generous offer that would have made Abram quite wealthy. He offered the rest of the goods to Abram in exchange for the people Abram rescued. The king's offer was in the form of a command, but it showed the weakness of the king's position. A strong king might have demanded that all of the goods be returned to him along with the people.

Abram refused to take the goods from the king of Sodom. He wanted to avoid a dubious connection with the city. He trusted in God more than in the provisions available from man (14:22, 23). While denying his own rights, Abram did not force his allies to make the same decision. He allowed them to take their portion of the spoils (14:24).

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Worldviews Played Out

Remember that the account of the separation of Lot and Abram concludes with Lot chasing opportunities to gain wealth for himself and with Abram sacrificing to the Lord. Abram acted in accordance with God's title of Possessor of all.

Abram's and Lot's worldviews then played out in the account of the invading kings. While Lot was seeking gain, he lost everything, including his freedom. Abram came to his aid and again recognized God as Possessor of all, passing on another opportunity to realize substantial financial gain. Sacrifice and giving again characterized Abram as he tithed to God and returned goods to Lot and the king of Sodom.

**ASK:** What word might you use to describe Lot's worldview? (Q13) *Perhaps get, chase, or more.*



**ASK:** What word might you use to describe Abram's worldview? (Q14) *Perhaps content, giving, or God-focused.*

Lot acted in accordance with what he could gain. Abram acted in accordance with Who God is. Knowing God is the possessor of all helped Abram focus on God during this time of his life. He understood the fruitlessness of becoming enamored with what already belonged to God.

## Worldview Consideration

**ASK:** What words might you use to describe your worldview? (Q15)

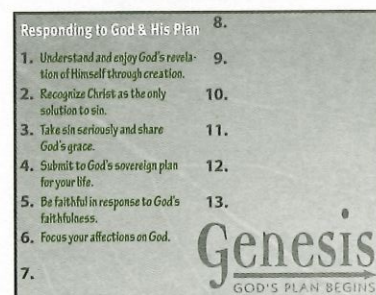
**ASK:** What do your words reveal about your understanding of God? (Q16)

God is the creator of and possessor of all. He is infinitely worthy of our affection and attention. If we are spending our lives wide-eyed and chasing, wanting, craving, and wishing, then we need to take some time to know God better. When we do, we will find our affections and attention will be focused on Him. Encourage your learners to spend time in God's Word purposefully getting to know God. (Q17)

## Summary and Memory Verse

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 6 or use the following: Focus your affections on God.

Encourage learners to memorize Genesis 14:19. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.





# Stars for the Nighttime Fears and Doubts

## ► Scripture Focus

Genesis 15–17

### Summary

God repeated and expanded His promises to Abram. Abram believed God, and God counted him righteous due to this trust. Sarai initiated a foolish plan for helping God accomplish His promises. Abram carried out the plan. God then communicated that Abram would be the father of a multitude of nations but not through Hagar's son, Ishmael. God demonstrated His omniscience and omnipotence by repeatedly communicating detailed prophecies regarding the future fulfillment of His promises to Abram and his descendants.

### Topic

God's knowledge

### Theme

God is omniscient and omnipotent and worthy of our trust.

### Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider his trust in God and what he might do to strengthen it.

### Materials

- Resources 1, 7, and 9
- Handout 1 from resource CD

## Outline

### I. God Reiterates His Promises (15)

- A. God promises an heir (15:1–6)
- B. God promises possession of the land (15:7–21)

### II. God Knows the Future (16; 17)

- A. God's knowledge demonstrated to Hagar (16)
- B. God's knowledge communicated to Abram (17)

### Memory Verse

*"After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1).*