

Title: My Favorite Uncle  
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Subject: Decisions  
Scripture: Genesis 13, 14, 19

Two of my ten uncles were my dad's brothers, one was a half-brother and the rest married in. Only Dale and John remain. A lot of them were talkers. Family get togethers – reunions, Christmases -- would be filled with stories and laughter. Cal and Cliff, brothers who married mom's sisters, seemed to compete in one upsmanship to see who could be the loudest. Uncle Bob always had a mischievous twinkle in his eye. Glen was my dad's hunting partner before my brothers and I were old enough and then for a few years until he died when I was in college. He also umpired our 4-H softball games. Wayne looked a lot like my dad. It's said of Cliff that he liked his eggs to be prepared a certain way -- fried, sunny side up, then covered with pepper until the white couldn't be seen, then covered with salt till the pepper wasn't visible. My favorites probably were Wayne on dad's side and Bob on mom's because we spent the most time with them.

This morning we're going to look at one man's favorite uncle and the interplay between the two of them. The man's father had died and this uncle took his nephew under his wing. Not sure there was much competition for favorite as his other uncle married his sister which would be the uncle marrying his niece. The nephew and uncle in question are Lot and Abraham. Thirteen chapters in Genesis are devoted to his story with the relationship between the two occupying 3 ½ chapters. They left Ur along with Abraham's wife Sarah and Abraham's dad/Lot's grandpa as God had called Abraham to go to the Promised Land (Acts 7:2). They did a quick stopover before heading to Egypt. We find them ready to move on from that place.

READ Genesis 13:1-9

Abraham and Lot had become wealthy by the time they left Egypt. No doubt some of Lot's had come as result of uncle Abraham. They moved around till they finally settled near Bethel. It worked for a time. But their flocks and herds were so big that there was pressure to find sufficient water and pasture. Their herdsmen began to quarrel. "We got here first. There's not enough for us and you. Go away!" "Who's going to make us? Give our flocks some water or else?" "Or else what?" "Or else you'll see."

Abraham recognized the behavior was totally inappropriate for God's people. "It's not right for us as brothers to fight." Abraham could have asserted his authority and eldership. "I will choose for both of us and you will get what I say you will get." He didn't do that. Abraham elevated the status of his nephew by calling him a brother. He deferred the choice to Lot who quickly salivated over the opportunity.

Lot chose the land that looked most productive. It was like “the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt.” The pair were familiar with Egypt’s ability to produce food. They probably heard stories that had been passed down through generations about “The Garden of the Lord.” It made perfect sense to take the best land. He moved to the Jordan Valley and south toward the Red Sea.

Choices have consequences. It’s always easier to have 20/20 hindsight about what we should have done. It helps when we can look at other people’s choices to see the kinds of questions that can be asked to help us determine what to do.

#### I. What does the Lord have to say about it?

The Lord spoke directly with Abraham. He gave him many promises. One concerned the land that would be his. Abraham believed the Lord would keep his promise and give him the land.

One potential fly in the ointment. When Abraham generously serves his nephew by giving him the right to choose, the Promised Land was in play. Lot could have chosen that land. However, his greed wouldn’t let him. It wouldn’t let him defer. “It’s really nice of you to let me have first pick, but I don’t deserve that privilege. It’s your right to choose and I’ll take whichever land you don’t.” Or he could have suggested some alternative method –casting lots, etc. Instead he was greedy.

It seems like his operational makeup was ungratefulness, greed, covetousness, selfishness, living for the day. Those are all spoken against by the Lord. The Lord is saying don’t use them as the basis for choosing.

Abraham trusted the Lord would be able to work according to his master plan. The Lord reaffirmed his promise to Abraham and told him the land, the entire land would belong to him and his descendants. He rewarded his servant.

We have the distinct privilege of being able to immerse ourselves in the life giving water of God’s Word. Those who drink from its springs, who avail themselves of its bounty, who mine its deposits, who probe its depths will find themselves being transformed by its promises, principles, standards and directives.

God doesn’t reveal specifics in his word about what color or kind of car to buy but he does give insight about how to be a good steward and be wise with money. He doesn’t tell us what to major in in college, but he does give gifts and motivations. He doesn’t tell us the color of clothes to wear but he does address issues like modesty and inner beauty. The better we know the Word the better prepared we will be to make decisions because our minds and hearts will be influenced by Him.

#### II. What’s behind the scenes?

There are some things Lot was aware of or should have been aware of that he didn’t factor into the decision. They were living among pagans. There were Perizzites who became parasites. READ 14:12, 13.

Lot pitched his tents near the wicked city of Sodom (13:12). He soon learned what it was like, how it was worse than all the rumors gleaned from caravans, how wicked it really was. He could have moved away. Instead he moved closer to the city, actually into it (14:12). Somehow he becomes one of the leading figures. He sits at the city gateway in a position of administrator and judge (19:1). It doesn't seem like it would take much for him to see the true underbelly of Sodom's true nature. He was aware of it, but stayed there anyway.

Things can appear to be absolutely phenomenal, painted with vivid colors of glowing promises and subtle shading of rich nuance to create fantastic appearances. They can also have bleak appearance. But what lies beneath the surface? The eyes can be deceived. The heart can be misled. The mind can be overwhelmed.

Obviously, we can't see all the consequences of a decision. And if we waited till we thought we did, we'd be waiting forever and never do anything. We can't see the unforeseen, but we can look around at the surroundings. Take time to think, pray, and dive beneath the surface to look at the motivations and try to get the real picture. Remember we operate by faith and not by sight.

III. How will it affect soul, my spiritual life with the Lord?

Lot moved closer to evil, as if to flirt with it (13:13). And then when he was rescued the first time, he moved back there. Lot didn't learn and certainly wasn't growing in his relationship with the Lord.

Someone likened Lot to "Mr. Average Christian." "On the outside, he lived a relatively moral and obedient life while toying on the inside with what it would be like to live in the Sodom of his world. We see this in our own lives when we sneak looks at magazines or movies that include just enough smut to be reputable to the world but detestable to God; by reading novels with just enough immorality to excite the imagination; by watching television programs with a pious attitude of self-righteousness but an inner joy of fantasizing over the world's kind of life styles. We thrive on just enough to engrave pictures of impurity on our minds as we decry to our Christian friends the indecency of it all and we love every minute of it. It is called pitching your tent toward Sodom. God calls it double-mindedness. He says it can be characterized by this: You will be unstable in all your ways. Abraham listened to where the Lord told him to go. After the separation of uncle and nephew, God told Abraham to walk through the entire land that would become his possession. He packed his tents and moved his herds and flocks to go to Hebron where he offered a sacrifice to the Lord (13:14-18)" ([higherpraise.com](http://higherpraise.com), Remembering Lot's Wife).

Which way are we moving? Closer to the Lord or temptation. In the general sense, are we seeking to live close to the Lord or just close enough that when the times comes he'll slip us into heaven by the skin of our teeth? It can also be in the specific sense as when temptation arises, which way are we moving? Running from it and to the Lord or slowly, maybe not so slowly, closer to sin and farther from the Lord?

#### IV. How will it affect my family?

Lot's decision to take the fam to sin city had a devastating impact. They fell under its influence. There are indications Lot had sons, probably married, and sons-in-law for his two daughters. The total would have come to at least the ten righteous that Abraham asked as the minimum from the Lord to spare the city.

Only four -- Lot, his wife and two daughters -- chose to leave. The angels had to forcefully evict them and warn them to not look back. When the foursome finally raced from the doomed city, the desire to look back became too strong for Mrs. Lot. It wasn't to see the judgment of God fall in fire from the sky. Apparently her heart was still in the city, all its things and its pleasures. She did get to stay close to the place she longed for -- as a pillar of salt. One source thought she was burned to death by the brimstone and encrusted with salt brine kicked up from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding area.

Down to three. Lot's daughters hatched a plan to increase the survivors. They'd grown so accustomed to wicked ways they thought nothing of getting their father so drunk that they could engage in incest in order to have kids (19:30-38). It didn't cross their minds that uncle Abraham could help them find a suitable husband. An extended consequence is the two babies were the ancestors of two of Israel's greatest enemies.

Abraham, for his part, wasn't perfect. Twice the Bible tells us he lied, not little white lies either (12:10-20, 20:1-18). Both times were to conceal the identity of his wife Sarah as Abraham was afraid he might be killed so Pharaoh or the king could take her as their wife. He told her to pretend to be his sister, to share in the lie, everywhere they went by saying he was her brother as a means of showing her love for him (20:13). There was a generational consequence as his children and children's children picked up the lying habit.

He also jumped the gun on getting an heir. The Lord promised he and Sarah would have a son. After waiting a few years, he planned to make his servant his heir (15:2, 3). The Lord stopped him and reaffirmed the promise (15:4). Sarah also got antsy for the promised child (16:1-5). She hatched a solution for Abraham to have a child through her servant. The result was disastrous for the family of Abraham. The servant's pregnancy and the child's birth caused infighting and bickering leading to the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. Ishmael's descendants became a plague to Israel. The promised son would be born 14 years after Sarah's failed plot.

What do we expose our families to? What are we willing to expose our families to? What steps will we take to ensure they are exposed to the Lord and his ways?

#### V. What influence will it allow me to have?

There's an old story about a man who tried to save the city of Sodom from destruction by warning the citizens. But the people ignored him. One day someone asked, "Why bother everyone? You can't change them." "Maybe I can't," the man replied, "but I still shout and scream to prevent them from changing me!"

Lot should have done more screaming at least for his own sake. His influence on the people of Sodom seemed to be negligible. His sons-in-law didn't believe him when he told them the Lord was going to destroy Sodom (19:14). They thought he was joking. No one joined him when the angels came to rescue the righteous. Maybe he rarely talked about spiritual matters so when the crucial time came they didn't give two cents to what he was saying. As noted earlier, he seemed to grow more accepting of the sinful practices that surrounded him. His influence and his family have been described with lots of D-words – disaster, disgrace, despair and death.

One of the two times Lot is mentioned in the New Testament he is called a “righteous man” who was “tormented in his righteous soul.” That's a hard one for me to wrap my brain around especially since he chose to live among the wicked and offered his daughters to be sexually abused as a means to protect the angels. But Lot was one of the righteous for whom Sodom could be spared if there were enough and he was rescued by the Lord as one of the righteous from the judgment by fire and brimstone. (2 Peter 2:7).

Here's the reason he's brought up. It's really more about God. “And if he (God) rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) — if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment” (2 Peter 2:7-9). The Lord knows how to and will rescue righteous people from trials both now and forever as he also knows how to reserve unrighteous people for punishment.

We are to have contact with those who are part of the world system and live lives that God would call unrighteous. However, we don't need to park ourselves in the middle of their sin or right next to it.

What influence will our choices allow us to have? Sometimes there isn't much to consider. But in the major ones, like job, place to live, kind of place to live, the way we treat people, the way we use our time – we need to think about the potential influence for Christ.

Here are the five questions -- What does the Lord have to say about it? What's behind the scenes? How will it affect soul, my spiritual life with the Lord? How will it affect my family? What influence will it allow me to have?