

Me, Myself and I | Sabotage #1

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You've got goals and dreams for the new year. That's great! But often our goals can be pretty self-centered as we focus on improving our own quality of life. The Old Testament story of Abram and Lot shows that if your hopes are only for yourself, you may hurt yourself in the long run. And you will certainly miss out on a greater joy and purpose that comes from God.

Selfishness always leaves you with less than you expected

Abram (later called Abraham) moved to the land of Canaan with his nephew Lot. Both of them prospered. Their herds became so large that conflict broke out between their herdsmen ([Genesis 13:5-6](#)). In response, Abram made the generous offer to divide the land with Lot. He gave Lot first choice, and Lot took the best land for himself ([Genesis 13:9-11](#)).

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Lot's choice seemed best in the short run, but it put him and his family in harm's way. The land he chose was filled with evil people ([Genesis 13:12](#)). One time, Lot was captured and lost everything he owned. Abram rescued him and got his goods back ([Genesis 14:12-16](#)). Soon Sodom, where Lot lived, was destroyed for its wickedness ([Genesis 19:24-25](#)). Abram pled to God for Lot's safety ([Genesis 19:29](#)). He survived, but his wife died and he lost all his wealth again. Lot ended up living in a cave, completely destitute ([Genesis 19:30](#)). Genesis never mentions him again.

In all, Lot got much less than he expected. In fact, his choice sabotaged what he really wanted. Selfishness will do that. It creates conflict, arguments, isolation, broken families, even war. It makes people hard-hearted and narcissistic. A self-centered goal can bring long-term problems, such as when a parent chooses career advancement over family time. If you're selfish, you may still achieve your goals. But are they the best goals? They will come with a cost you didn't consider.

Unselfish service always rewards you with more than you realize

By contrast to Lot, Abram's actions help us understand what unselfishness looks like. He was very generous with Lot. But God was even more generous with him. After giving away half of his land to Lot, God made Abram a promise.

***Genesis 13:14** After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction – north and south, east and west. I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession."*

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Jesus provides an even greater example of the rewards of unselfish service. First, he made a sacrifice much greater than Abram's, and the result was great joy.

***Hebrews 12:2** Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.*

Jesus sacrificially endured the pain and shame of dying on the cross because of the joy it would bring. Like Lot, Jesus went to live among evil people. He ended up captive and desolate. Unlike Lot, it wasn't because of any bad or selfish choices. He did it for the joy of winning our eternal salvation.

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Second, Jesus' example shows how unselfish service unfolds a greater purpose.

Mark 10:45 *For even the Son of Man [Jesus] came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

If anyone deserved to be served, it was Jesus. But he came to serve. Abram paid a price on Lot's behalf – more than once. But Jesus paid an even greater price for us. He paid a ransom for our sins so that we can be saved. As a result, when we are connected with him, our service can also have a redemptive purpose in people's lives. For example, we can mentor others, show God's love to our neighbors, and help others at church.

[Related: The Cross of Jesus and the Courtroom]

Serving combats the dangers of selfishness. It also unlocks life's greatest joy and purpose. So as you pursue your goals, don't sabotage them by focusing only on yourself. God has more for you than just your own quality of life. In gratitude for Jesus' unselfish sacrifice, be sure to include serving others in your plans for the new year.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *What is your initial reaction to this video? Do you disagree with any of it? What jumped out at you?*
3. *Do you make New Year's resolutions or goals for yourself? How good are you at following through on them? What makes you successful or unsuccessful?*
4. *Describe a time when you sabotaged yourself. When did you realize that you were the one who messed up the situation?*
5. *Read [Genesis 13:5-14](#). In what ways did Lot's choice give him less than he expected?*
6. *Give an example of how a self-centered goal may be good in the short run but harmful in the long run.*
7. *Read [Hebrews 12:2](#). What was the joy Jesus anticipated as he endured the cross? How is the cross an act of self-sacrifice? How might our acts of unselfishness lead to joy?*
8. *Read [Mark 10:45](#). What does this verse teach us about our priorities as Christians?*
9. *List one or two ways you can serve others over the next two months. Be specific.*
10. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*