



Abigail

Unusual Women in the Bible Zoom Bible Study

June 7, 2022

Introduction

The story of Abigail comes at a time in the history of God's people, Israel, when they have transitioned from being governed by God's appointed judges to insisting they want a king.

1 Samuel 8:4 – 9, 19 – 20

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."⁶ But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord.

⁷And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. ⁸As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. ⁹Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."

¹⁹But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. ²⁰Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

What happens when we insist that our way is better than God's way? When we want to be like "all the other nations"?

Jeremiah 7:13: While you were doing all these things, declares the Lord, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer.

Psalms 81:13 – 16

"If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways,¹⁴ how quickly I would subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!

¹⁵Those who hate the Lord would cringe before him, and their punishment would last forever. ¹⁶But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

Now, after Saul was appointed king and had a disastrous reign, Saul admits that David has done right and he has done wrong.

1 Samuel 24:16 – 20:

When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. ¹⁷"You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. ¹⁸You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. ¹⁹When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today. ²⁰I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.

Saul acknowledges how wrong he has been but he doesn't change. Saul is a good example of a fool as we saw in our study of Proverbs.



1 Samuel 25:1 - 9

Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.

² A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. ³ His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

⁴ While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. ⁵ So he sent ten young men and said to them, "Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. ⁶ Say to him: 'Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!'"

⁷ "Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. ⁸ Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them."

⁹ When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.

We meet Nabal, a wealthy man from the tribe of Caleb. Do you remember Caleb? He was one of the two spies who said they could take the promised land.

Numbers 14:38: Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived.

Then when Joshua was distributing the land as Moses had told him to, Caleb went to him and said:

Joshua 14:10 – 12:

"Now then, just as the Lord promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹ I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. ¹² Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said."

Nabal is from the Calebite tribe, but he has wandered far from his roots—his heritage.

Jesus told the parable of the "rich fool."

Luke 12:21: "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

Nabal was a rich fool who was NOT rich toward God.

- Narcissist
- Always right, never wrong
- Totally self centered
- No compassion
- "Surly and mean in his dealings"

But he married well. Abigail is described as beautiful and intelligent, and we learn from her story how wise and humble and smart she was. How did Abigail tolerate Nabal?

Somehow she learned to accept Nabal and get through life with as little strife as possible.

Proverbs 10:12: Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.

Proverbs 17:9: Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Romans 12:18: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

1 Samuel 25: 10 – 13

Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. ¹¹ Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?"

¹² David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. ¹³ David said to his men, "Each of you strap on your sword!" So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

Imagine David's anger when this hard-hearted, rude man responded with such contempt. Notice how selfish Nabal is with his food, even though he is wealthy!

You may think that if you had more money, all your problems would be resolved, but think again. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, we read in 1 Timothy, and Proverbs 30: 8-9 is a good prayer for us today:

Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.⁹ Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

1 Timothy 6:17 – 19

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸ Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. ¹⁹ In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

So, David does what we might well do—in his anger, he sins! He's going to get back at this terrible man, Nabal.

1 Samuel 25:14 – 17:

One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. ¹⁵ Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. ¹⁶ Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. ¹⁷ Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

The servants went to Abigail to seek her intervention in this situation; they dared not go to Nabal. Nabal's servants were afraid of him. They had no respect for him. So, they go to Abigail.

1 Samuel 25:18 – 22

Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. ¹⁹ Then she told her servants, "Go on ahead; I'll follow you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

²⁰ As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. ²¹ David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. ²² May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"

Abigail acts quickly because she recognizes if she does not act quickly, it would be disastrous for her, her husband and their servants.

There are times we need to act cautiously, wait awhile, pray a lot before we take some action. But there are times when we know what ought to be done and we do it.

How do we discern when to act quickly and when to “wait on the Lord”?

Isaiah 35:4: ...say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.”

Psalms 27:14: Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

What holds you back from acting quickly?

- Fear?
- Unsure what to do?
- Not sure you are the right person to do it?

What are some signs that you should take quick action?

- If you don’t, others will be harmed.
- You have an opportunity now but it may never come again.
- There is no one else who can or would take quick action.
- It is “your job”—your responsibility.

It is no small thing for Abigail to decide to ride out and meet David and his men. She’s a woman in a man’s world, and women were not taken seriously in this culture.

Abigail is very brave, very wise and very resourceful. She uses what she has—food, servants and donkeys—to do what needs to be done.

1 Samuel 25:23 – 27

When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said: “Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. ²⁵ Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. ²⁶ And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. ²⁷ And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

This woman is smart! Notice how careful she is to approach David correctly.

Matthew 10:16: “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Abigail was very shrewd while being innocent and humble. Notice how she quickly defuses David’s anger by admitting right up front that he has been wronged by Nabal. She didn’t defend his actions—they were defenseless. She calls Nabal what he is: a wicked fool. And she says that “folly goes with him.”

Much “folly goes with some people” these days. We should show those people no honor, give them no quarter, because folly goes with them and it harms everyone they touch.

1 Samuel 25:28 – 31

“Please forgive your servant’s presumption. The Lord your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord’s battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. ²⁹ Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. ³⁰ When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, ³¹ my lord will not have on his

conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.”

Everything Abigail says is true, but she’s smart enough to let David know that she knows he is God’s appointed king, and she speaks a prophecy to him. She reminds him that if he kills as he has planned, it will be on his conscience forever and cause him all kinds of needless regret and save innocent lives. Then she simply says, “Remember your servant.” This is a godly, wise woman.

1 Samuel 25:32 – 35

David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. ³³ May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. ³⁴ Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.”

³⁵ Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, “Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.”

David recognizes that Abigail has been the voice of the Lord to him. He honors her for her courage and no doubt he was greatly impressed with this incredible, beautiful woman.

Abigail did what she could and what she was supposed to do, but then she leaves it in God’s hand: Her words were heard and her request was granted. But the battle was the Lord’s and God fought for Abigail and granted her request.

Please don’t miss the lessons we can learn from Abigail:

- God needs intelligent, wise and courageous women today.
- Don’t let fear keep you from taking courageous action.
- Be very wise in choosing your words, especially in a confrontational situation.
- Be very humble in your approach.
- Don’t be defensive; defuse anger by agreeing with them when you can.