

Abigail: Beauty & Wisdom  
I Samuel 25:2-44

*For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself  
will be exalted. Luke 14:11*

As we left Hannah last week, Samuel was a child barely beginning his service to God in the temple with Eli. Today we find ourselves about 80 years later, Samuel having just died. Saul is still the king of Israel. David has been chosen to take Saul's place but at this point in time is on the run. He had just had the encounter with Saul in the cave and spared his life after cutting off the hem of Saul's robe. So David was on the move again with his 600 men and their families. Feeding this group was a huge responsibility. To provide food and supplies, David had to depend on wealthy landowners and others who were sympathetic to his cause. David and his men provided protection against the Philistine marauders who would sweep down to kill, destroy, and steal whatever they wanted. Many citizens and property owners willingly supported David and his band of fugitives for the service they provided. The background set, thus we come to Abigail and her story.

I Samuel 25:2-3

Nabal was a wealthy man who lived in Maon and owned business property in Carmel. This land was located west of the Dead Sea, a vast area that provided good grazing for his three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, a really large flock. It was sheep shearing time which involved a lot of work but also was a time of festivity and lavish hospitality towards others. More than likely, Nabal owned the flocks but had no part in their actual day to day care; he hired shepherds to do that for him. He only showed up for the celebration part of the sheep shearing. Nabal's name gives an indication as to his character because it means "fool." We don't know if Nabal was given this name at birth or he earned it but he certainly lived up to it! The scripture tells us he was "*harsh and evil in his dealings.*"

Abigail, his wife, is the complete opposite, her name meaning "source of joy." She is both beautiful and wise. We might ask how she ever got matched up with a man like Nabal. Keeping in mind the time she lived, the marriage was probably arranged and she had no say in the matter at all. However, there are many Abigails today who are in that place not because it was arranged but because they chose it. Abigail has much to teach us about dealing with that situation.

In verses 4-13, David heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep and thought it was the right time to ask him for compensation for the services they had provided. He had waited until Nabal "harvested his crop" and had an abundance. David did this very respectfully. He sent ten young men rather than going himself so Nabal would not feel intimidated by his presence. David instructed the men to do four things:

- greet Nabal by wishing him a long life and good health
- remind him that David and his men had protected his shepherds and flocks from

bandits and that his men had taken nothing for themselves -  
Nabal's own shepherds could verify that

- request supplies - a small amount would have sufficed considering there were only ten men to bring it back
- remind Nabal it was customary to be generous to others at harvest time

I'm sure the young men were shocked at Nabal's response: "*Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master.*" Who wouldn't know of the hero who had slain Goliath just a few years ago? David was famous through all of Israel. The women sang his praises for his heroic deeds. Nabal said this as a direct insult to David - fully knowing who he was but refusing to acknowledge him. In today's language, Nabal was saying, "Who does he think he is?" He then deepened the insult by suggesting that David was a traitor to the king of Israel, a rebel. (Which was totally a lie - look how many times David had spared Saul when he could have killed him.) Nabal selfishly concludes saying he was not going to share any of his food with them!

When his men returned, David received Nabal's response exactly the way Nabal intended for it to be received: with great insult. Nabal, in his arrogance and drunkenness, never considered what David's response to that insult might be. He forgot that David was not a weak man; he was a great soldier and a warrior. David was ready to fight. "*Every man gird on his sword!*" Instant retribution! This was not one of David's better moments. He didn't respond the way the Lord would have him respond. God would have us bear insults with love and kindness, returning their evil with our good. David wasn't showing Nabal the same kindness and long-suffering that he had just recently shown to Saul. Taking 400 men with him, he had every intention of wiping out Nabal and his household.

#### I Samuel 25:14-17

As the mistress of the house, Abigail at this time, probably had her hands full taking care of her guests and making sure their needs were met. In spite of this, one of the young workers went directly to inform Abigail what Nabal had done. Obviously, he felt Abigail was approachable and would listen, unlike her husband. He verified that David's men had taken care of them and were deserving of compensation for their services. Nabal's servants knew David would not take such an insult lying down. For their sake and for the sake of the household, they asked Abigail to do something. Their future was in her hands.

This gives us some insight as to how Abigail chose to live her life. In spite of her horrible husband she ran her house well. She obviously treated her servants kindly because they felt free to go to her with a problem and trusted her to do something. She was a woman of faith and God blessed her with an intelligent mind. She was joyful in spite of her less than perfect circumstances.

#### I Samuel 25:18-19

Abigail understood the gravity of the situation instantly and knew there was no time to waste. She was well acquainted with her husband's behavior when he was drunk and also knew that a strong-minded man like David would not let the insult pass. She had the inner boldness and courage to do what Nabal should have done but didn't do. She would stand in the gap. The fact that she was able to gather so much food so quickly reveals her a very capable and affluent

woman. Seeing how wealthy Nabal was made his stubborn refusal to share with David even worse.

As soon as the provisions were loaded on the donkeys they began their journey to find David. Abigail wisely sent the servants ahead of her so that David would see the food arriving, hoping to calm David's anger down a little bit before she came face to face with him. As they traveled, don't you imagine she was practicing in her head what she would say to David, looking for just the right words, just the right tone of voice? Then, entering a mountain ravine, she suddenly spied David and his 400 men rushing towards her - obviously on their way to take vengeance against her husband and his household.

I think I would have been paralyzed with fear and unable to move or else run for cover. Not Abigail. She quickly got off her donkey, fell on her face, and bowed before David, approaching in genuine humility. She asked David to place the blame on her even though she was guilty of nothing. She willingly did that to spare the innocent lives of those in her household. She apologized for her husband's actions and acknowledged that Nabal was a fool, just as his name indicated. Things would have been different if only she had been the one to speak to his men earlier.

In verse 26, Abigail goes beyond a wife interceding for her husband and her household and becomes a messenger from the Lord. She speaks of David's character in high terms, "*For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days.*" (vs. 28) She guided David to look beyond the present circumstances to the bigger promise of God. She asked David not to do something he would regret when God's promise was fulfilled. She wisely asked David to consider the outcome of his present course and how bad it would be. She then asked him to let the Lord settle the matter rather than taking vengeance into his own hands.

#### I Samuel 25:29

In essence, Abigail was saying, "David, you are like a bundle that the Lord holds closely to Himself. Your enemies are like rocks that the Lord will sling away." Her choice of words had to remind David of the time when he really did trust God for victory - when he cast a stone out of his sling and killed Goliath. Her wise choice of words turned David's focus from Nabal back to the Lord. Rather than beating David down with harsh words about how wrongly he was behaving, Abigail lifted him up by reminding him of the great destiny God had planned for him. Abigail gives us a perfect example of "sweetly speaking submission." Proverbs 15:1-2 describes her perfectly, "*A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.<sup>2</sup> The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*"

#### I Samuel 25:32-35

David was on a sinful course and Abigail, through her bold, quick, and wise appeal, stopped him from sin. David knew God was speaking to him through Abigail. He was being taught a good lesson - our hurt feelings never justify disobedience. David thanked God that Abigail had reminded him of his destiny to reign over Israel in righteousness and integrity. If David had slain Nabal and his household it would forever be a black mark against David among the Israelites. David was man enough and wise enough to take counsel from a woman and Abigail was brave enough to speak what God told her.

I Samuel 25:36-39

When Abigail returned home, there was Nabal still celebrating like he hadn't a care in the world, totally oblivious to the bloodshed that had been so narrowly averted. If Nabal had just generously shared with David from his bounty, his life could have been spared. Abigail's wise action saved Nabal from David and saved David from himself. But it couldn't save Nabal from God's judgement. When it was the right time, God took care of him. David knew the death of Nabal was God's judgement.

David then sent his servants to Abigail, requesting that she become his wife. She greeted his servants, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." Her success with David had not changed her into an arrogant or bossy woman. God had used her but she took it in stride. She quickly agreed to become David's wife and left to join him.

We don't really know the rest of her story but marrying David would bring about some changes. Instead of living in an established home in one location, Abigail now becomes part of the group that moves from place to place avoiding Saul and his men. However, seeing Abigail's resilient character, we have no doubt that she continued to live joyfully and trust God no matter what her circumstances were. As David said of her,

*"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! <sup>33</sup> And blessed is your advice and blessed are you..." I Samuel 25:32-33a*

Lessons from Abigail

1. Even though she was married to a horrible man, she chose to make the best of the situation. She looked to God for her strength and guidance and He took care of her and blessed her. We never have to stay stuck in fear or defeat, thinking our situation will never change. God can change things in a moment. He sees our heart and works powerfully on behalf of those who follow and trust Him. God is able to carry you through.

2. Don't let fear hold you back - move forward in God's courage and wisdom. No matter how difficult or threatening the situation, God's power within us is greater than we can comprehend. He is able to use any of us, no matter how insignificant or powerless we may feel. Instead of hiding, Abigail bravely moved forward, towards the danger, knowing that God was with her.

3. Our words and actions can be powerful so it is wise that we think before we say anything. Often we open our mouth first and then regret it later. Abigail approached David with humility and managed to change his mind - she thought through the effect of her words ahead of time. A more aggressive approach might have angered David further and cost innocent lives.

*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil. Proverbs 15:28*

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Proverbs 18:21*

*She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Proverbs 31:26*

4. Remember God is always with you. Often when we are faced with difficult battles or hard struggles, we may feel like we've been left on our own. But God is always with us, leading us with wisdom and discernment and pouring out His strength and grace. Be assured that God knows everything about you. He understands the burdens you carry and He is fighting for you right now. Keep following His lead and draw closer to Him. Just like Abigail, He will be faithful to give you grace for each day and power to walk through the most difficult times.

