



HOW TO HANDLE
TOXIC
PEOPLE

S E R M O N G U I D E

How To Handle Toxic People

1 Samuel 25:1-42

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

Have you ever found yourself dealing with a toxic person? They are abusive, they bring you down, they stress you out, cause you harm, bring you distress, and sometimes they downright get on your nerves. If so, the question becomes what should we do about the presence of a toxic person or toxic people in our lives? In 1 Samuel 25, there’s a story about a woman named Abigail who was married to a toxic man, and she models for us how to handle the toxic person in our lives, whether it’s a spouse, a family member, friend, co-worker, or church member, Abigail teaches us how to handle toxic people, and we’re going to learn a lot from her in today’s message.

KEY POINTS

1. Discern Who And What You Are Dealing With

In verse 18, when Nabal does what he does, Abigail isn’t thrown off or surprised by it. What he did is something that threatens her home and her well-being, and she does not go into a frenzy asking herself and her servants why in the world would he do something like that.

I think that’s because she’s been down this road with Nabal before, and she knows who and what she is dealing with. So much so that when she goes to David she says, “My Lord please don’t pay attention to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool.” Abigail is able to be clear-headed about this situation because she knows who her husband is and what she is dealing with. And we need to have the same kind of discernment when we are dealing with toxic people.

2. Maintain Emotional Distance

When Abigail first learns what Nabal has done, she doesn’t allow her emotions to take over and cause her to confront Nabal. She doesn’t get in his face and start yelling, screaming, and arguing about how he handled the situation. She knows he’s a fool and does not let his foolish behavior cause her to act a fool.

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1 Samuel 25:1-42

In verse 19, she doesn't even tell him of her plan to work things out, and in verse 36 she does not tell him that she has worked everything out without his help because he is drunk. It's as if she knows that it's a waste of time trying to reason with an unreasonable person. And that lesson is perhaps one that you need to learn. Rather than being drawn into the toxicity of the toxic person in your life, maintain some emotional distance, because if you don't, they will continue to ruin your life.

3. Develop A Plan That Neutralizes The Toxic Person

This situation was handled because Abigail devised a plan to work around the toxic mess created by her husband. She has no time to be consumed with the insanity of Nabal's behavior. She needed a plan that would contain his behavior, and clean up the consequences, and Abigail's plan entailed what I want to call a "low contact strategy." Low contact is when you decide to interact and/or communicate with the toxic person on a limited or as-needed basis. This is a type of plan that's healthy to implement if you want to neutralize a toxic person.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When was a time you dealt with a toxic person in your life? How did you respond?
2. What is your plan to neutralize the toxic people in your life?
3. What are some steps you can take to maintain emotional distance from the toxic people in your life?
